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THE

WORKS

OF

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LETTERS

TO

UNITARIANS.

LETTERS TO UNITARIANS.*

LETTER I.

Respected Friends,

It has been the general sentiment of those who are denominated *Unitarians* in this country, that *religious controversy* is undesirable, and of dangerous tendency; and that it is the duty of Christians of different parties to look with candor on each other's opinions, and not to magnify, beyond necessity, the points of difference. To this sentiment, respecting the danger of controversy and the importance of candor and forbearance, I cordially agree. I regard it as one of the great ends which remains to be achieved by the influence of the Christian religion, that all bitterness and strife should be banished from the world, and the spirit of love and harmony universally prevail. With a view to this momentous end, I have made it my care to guard, as far as possible, against introducing anything disputatious into the pulpit, especially on an occasion of so much interest and so much tender emotion, as that of ordaining a Christian minister. I admit, indeed, the lawfulness, and, in some cases, the expedience and necessity of religious controversy; and I have endeavored to form some definite views of the principles on which it ought to be conducted. But I will frankly express my apprehension, that it may require more caution, meekness, and self-control, than I

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possess, to secure an exact observance of those rules of controversy, which I should prescribe for others. At the present time, and in my present undertaking, I cannot be insensible of special danger, as the controversy between the two parties has for several years been carried on in various forms, and with no inconsiderable warmth, and as there are on both sides, and even among the more moderate, too many symptoms of strong excitement. But whatever may be the circumstances of the present time, or the nature of the business I have undertaken, I wish here to declare my utter abhorrence of the practice, which has been too common, of applying reproachful epithets to an opponent, and of misrepresenting his real opinions, or endeavoring, by painting them in the most glaring colors, to expose them to contempt — especially of any disposition to sully his reputation, to inflict a wound on his feelings, or to triumph at the discovery of his imperfections. Such things are totally repugnant to the legitimate ends of controversy, and ought to be reprobated by all Christians, just as we reprobate the ferocities and cruelties of savage war.

The sermon which occasions these Letters to you, is entitled to particular attention, on account of the talents and public character of the author, and, most of all, because he feels himself authorized to speak in *your name*. The sermon comes forth as the voice of your denomination, and is extensively circulated as an instrument of promoting your cause. In these circumstances, it is unquestionably proper that our attention should be turned afresh to the question, whether the cause which this sermon advocates is indeed *the cause of God*.

To men who are friends of unfettered inquiry, I shall think it unnecessary to offer any apology for the freedom of my remarks on the various subjects which will be brought into view in these Letters. And I hope you will not deem it improper, that my remarks should be addressed to *you*, — inasmuch as the subjects of the discussion on which I am entering have been introduced by one, who appears before the public as *your representative*; — especially as the manner in which he treats these subjects is, in most respects, not unlike the manner in which they have generally

been treated by those who have embraced the Arian or the Socinian faith. This sermon is a fair specimen of the mode in which we have been accustomed to see our religious opinions opposed in the writings of Unitarians. Now it must be allowed to be a sufficient justification of this attempt of mine, if I am fully convinced that my opinions, and those of the orthodox generally, are misunderstood and essentially misrepresented by *Unitarians*, and particularly by the author of this sermon. I am convinced of this. And I think, too, that the mistaken views exhibited in the sermon, are exhibited in a manner which, after cool and sober examination, neither the writer nor his readers will be much disposed to justify.

It seems there has, for sometime, been a general expectation in this vicinity of some publication from me, relative to the sermon which is the occasion of these Letters; and inquiries have not unfrequently been made, as to the reason of such a delay. Those reasons I will now frankly state. First. The regular duties of my office are sufficient to occupy my whole time; and I found it would require some effort in me, to be able to devote only a few hours in a week to such an employment as this. Another reason was, that I wished not to interrupt the attention, which the public were inclined to give to what had already been written on one of the principal subjects of discussion between the two parties. Besides; I hoped that, by taking a longer time, I should keep myself at a greater distance from the agitation and heat of controversy, and more perfectly avoid every appearance of wishing to make a personal attack upon any man; and that I should be better able to fix your attention, as well as my own, upon the subjects themselves which were to be investigated, without regard to any considerations not conducive to a fair and thorough investigation.

The favor which I now ask of you is, not that you would treat my opinions and arguments with lenity and forbearance, but that you would give me a patient and candid hearing, while I attempt, on several important points, to explain and defend the religious sentiments of the orthodox in New England; and while I attempt

to show in what respects the writings of Unitarians essentially misrepresent our faith, and exhibit a manner of reasoning which is liable to just exceptions. I wish particularly to state the objections which I feel, to several representations and modes of argumentation contained in this sermon, and to suggest some reasons why the author himself, and those who have implicitly relied upon the correctness of his positions, should allow themselves time for a serious review of the ground of this controversy. I wish, in short, as far as the limits which I must prescribe for myself will allow, to do justice to myself and my brethren, and to satisfy those who differ from us, as to the character and the proof of that system of religion which we believe.

The subjects which have been discussed by my colleague, the Rev. Moses Stuart, will here be omitted. It is at his suggestion, and that of others, that I have turned aside from my common labors, to take a part in the controversy which divides this region of our country. But though I am urged to this undertaking by the request of those in whom I repose entire confidence, and though I am fully persuaded that the opinions of the orthodox have been treated unjustly; I am almost ready to withdraw my hand from this work, from an apprehension, that my efforts may serve but to increase or perpetuate the spirit of prejudice and animosity, which has shown itself among us in so many forms, and which, so far as it prevails, does really cut off all prospect of attaining the ends of free investigation. Still I indulge the hope, that a different spirit will gain ground. And I could wish, that the Reverend Author who has undertaken to speak in your behalf, might have enjoyed the happiness of a more unruffled mind, and the honor of doing something more for that cause which he is so well able to promote — *the cause of love, candor, and gentleness.* I think that he and many others will acknowledge the benefit they have, in this respect, derived from the example of my colleague. It is from the hope that I may be guided by the same motive with him, and that, whatever else I may fail of accomplishing, I may help to diffuse a spirit of unprejudiced inquiry and Christian kindness, that I am encouraged to proceed.

LETTER II.

Respected Friends,

The author, who speaks in your name, has at length, it seems, obtained satisfaction as to the propriety of having a *creed*, or *confession of faith*. In his sermon, he has expressly given to the public the opinions which Unitarians believe, in distinction from the opinions commonly called orthodox. The design is just and honorable. I am utterly unable to conceive, what valid objection there can be against the attempt of any denomination of Christians to make the public acquainted with their views on religious subjects; or, in other words, to exhibit the *articles of their faith*. The thing is evidently proper in itself, and often necessary, though liable to abuse. With so respectable an example before you, I trust you will be free from any further difficulties on this subject, and will proceed, as occasion may require, to correct any mistaken apprehensions which the public may entertain respecting your opinions, and to give them a just view of what you believe to be the Christian religion. You owe this to the community. You owe it to yourselves. And it is obvious that justice, in this respect, can be rendered to you by none but yourselves. Other men, especially those who differ from you, cannot be competent to make known your faith, any further than they are instructed and authorized by you. Doubtless you have felt that you have had reason to complain of the incorrectness of some orthodox writers, who have undertaken to make a statement of your views. It is with manifest propriety that you have now claimed the right, and, through him who acts as your organ of communication, have exercised the right of declaring your own opinions. If you are just to yourselves, you will not stop here. Whenever others impute to you opinions which you do not entertain, or deny to you those which you do entertain; and whenever they are doubtful as to your faith; you will feel that it belongs to you to interpose,

and to do yourselves justice. And you would think it a gross violation of the rules of Christian candor, for any man to declare your opinions to be different from your own serious declaration. Grant me, and those with whom I have the happiness to be united in opinion, the same right which you so justly claim for yourselves, *the right of forming and declaring our own opinions, and of being believed when we declare them.* We have a just claim to the last, as well as to the first, unless there are substantial reasons to question our veracity.

By a diligent study of the Scriptures, with the best helps afforded us, we have arrived at some settled views on the subjects of religion. These views we wish to declare. And if we would declare them justly, we must declare them in *our own language*, and do what is in our power to make that language intelligible. Where the meaning of the terms employed is doubtful or obscure, it belongs to us to give the necessary explanations. Where the terms are liable to be understood with greater latitude than comports with our views, it belongs to us to give the necessary limitations. And where our positions, in any respect, need modifying, it belongs to us to modify them. It is certainly reasonable to expect, when dealing with men of candid, liberal minds, that the language which we use to express our faith will be understood, not in the sense which, taken by itself, it might possibly bear, nor in the sense which others might be inclined to put upon it, but *precisely according to our explanations.* These explanations, you will understand, do as really make a part of the proper declaration of our faith, as the words which form any general proposition. Nothing can be more obviously just than all this, especially on a subject which is of a complex nature, or of difficult explication.

In relation to this point, I have a few remarks to make on the sermon now under consideration. The author informs the public what opinions he and those who agree with him, embrace and what they reject. This he has a right to do. Considering the circumstances of the case, he ought to do it. Nor can any one doubt that he is qualified to do it in the best manner. But

he goes further. He undertakes to give an account of *my* creed, and the creed of others with whom I agree. This is a more delicate task. In this he is evidently liable to mistake; and, after all he may say on the subject, we may find it necessary to speak for ourselves. If the account he gives of our faith is not given in our language, and with our explanations and modifications — in a word, if not given in a manner which corresponds with our real opinions, we must expose the incorrectness. Most of all shall we have reason for animadversion, if he ever adopts that mode of representation, which men usually adopt, who wish to make the opinions of their opponents appear as exceptionable and absurd as possible.

So far as this sermon shall come under review, my remarks will relate chiefly to two points. *The first is, its affirming that certain opinions belong peculiarly and exclusively to Unitarians, when in fact they are held by the orthodox. The second is, the misrepresentations it makes of the opinions which the orthodox entertain, and of the reasoning commonly used to support them.* These two points cannot always be kept perfectly distinct; but it will be sufficiently evident to which my observations relate.

Heretofore it has been common for Unitarians, in this country, and, if I mistake not, for this author himself, to assert that there is *no essential difference* between them and the orthodox. For the sake of preventing disunion and strife, they have seemed to think it desirable, that the difference should be made to appear as small as possible. But, from the tenor of this discourse, one would naturally suppose that this author's judgment had changed, and that he thought some important end was to be answered, by making the difference between the two parties as wide as possible. If this is a matter of fact, it is easy to see how it may have occasioned some of the mistakes into which he has been led.

In the sermon, p. 3, he declares what regard he and his particular friends feel for the Bible, and the principles of interpretation by which they govern themselves, in determining what doctrines it contains. "We regard the Scriptures," he says, "as the

record of God's successive revelations to mankind, and particularly of the last and most perfect revelation of his will by Jesus Christ. Whatever doctrines seem to us to be clearly taught in the Scriptures, we receive without reserve or exception." It is implied in what he says, that this sentiment of reverence for the Scriptures is *peculiar* to *Unitarians*. For he first expresses his design, to lay before his hearers "some of the *distinguishing* opinions of that class of Christians" in whose name he speaks; and then, at the close, says, *that he has given their "distinguishing views;"* — that is, their views in *distinction* from those of the orthodox. But is it so? Is this high veneration for the Scriptures peculiar to *Unitarians?* Do not the orthodox uniformly declare their reverence for the Bible, and their readiness to submit to all its instructions? Do they not embrace that system of doctrines which is peculiar to them, purely because they are convinced it is contained in the word of God, and because, with this conviction, they cannot reject it without disrespect to that word? Read their confessions of faith, their systems of divinity, their commentaries, sermons, catechisms, and books of devotion, and then say, whether they do not manifest as high a regard for the sacred volume, as this author expresses? Why then should it be signified, that this veneration for the Bible is among those things which *distinguish* Unitarians from the orthodox? Such a representation must certainly appear unaccountable to one who knows what opinions have generally been avowed by these two parties, respecting the regard which is due to the holy Scriptures.

As to the principles of interpretation referred to, there is no need of adding anything to what has been written by Professor Stuart. These principles, you perceive, are not peculiar to Unitarians. They are substantially the principles of the orthodox; so that, if you adopt them, the question between us is not, as would appear from the sermon, whether these principles are to be *admitted;* but to what *conclusions* will they conduct us, when fairly applied to the interpretation of Scripture.

In relation to this point, the author does indeed seem to make

a concession in favor of others. "We do not announce these principles," he says, "as original, or peculiar to ourselves." But immediately he takes occasion to follow his opponents with a train of reproachful insinuations, signifying, that although they occasionally adopt these principles, they vehemently decry them when their cause requires; that they willingly avail themselves of reason when it can be pressed into the service of their own party, and only complain of it when its weapons wound themselves; that they violate the fundamental rules of reasoning, sacrifice the plain to the obscure, etc.

Under the same head I might place the following remarks of this author: "God's wisdom is a pledge, that whatever is necessary for *us*, and necessary for salvation, is revealed too plainly to be mistaken, and too consistently to be questioned by a sound and upright mind. It is not a mark of wisdom to use an unintelligible phraseology, and to confuse and unsettle the intellect by appearances of contradiction." Here, also, he evidently means to express sentiments which belong *peculiarly* to his own party. But why did it not occur to his recollection, that *the plainness and intelligibleness of the Scriptures on all essential points*, is a principle for which the orthodox in New England have uniformly contended, even in their controversy with Unitarians.

Under the second head of his discourse, the author undertakes "to state some of the views which Unitarians derive from the sacred book, particularly those which distinguish them from other Christians." It will be to my purpose just to notice the first doctrine he states, though it has been remarked upon so satisfactorily in the publication above named. This is the *divine unity;* which the author represents as a doctrine *peculiar* to his party. After reading his remarks, and the remarks of other Unitarians on this subject, who would expect to find, that all the respectable writers on the side of orthodoxy have strenuously asserted the *unity* of *God*, as a fundamental doctrine of revelation, and have declared, times without number, that they admit no views of the divine character inconsistent with this? Who would expect to find that, in all confessions of faith written by Trinitarians, the *unity* of God

is one of the first doctrines which is asserted, and one of the first, which is distinctly and largely defended in all their theological systems? Truly, my friends, this doctrine is as important in our view, as it can be in yours. And we could hardly have more reason to charge Unitarian authors with injustice, should they represent us as denying the *existence* of God, than when they represent us as denying his *unity*.

But we proceed to another point, on which this author lays still greater stress. "We believe," he says, "in *the moral perfection of God*. We value our views of Christianity chiefly, as they assert his amiable and venerable attributes." From the professed object of the discourse, and the language here employed, it appears, that the author makes it the grand characteristic of Unitarianism in distinction from orthodoxy, that it asserts the *moral perfection of God*. But is this representation according to truth? Is it a representation, which he is authorized to make? When the most eminent divines and most enlightened Christians, who have at any time embraced the common doctrines of orthodoxy,—Luther, Calvin, Boyle, Hale, Baxter, Doddridge, Watts, Edwards, Hopkins, Dwight, Emmons, and multitudes of the same general faith, unite in declaring expressly and constantly, that they *believe in the moral perfection of God*, that they ascribe to him infinite justice, goodness and holiness, and continually adore his amiable and venerable attributes; who is entitled to look down upon this host of worthies and reply, — "it is very possible to speak of God magnificently, and to think of him meanly; to apply to his person high sounding epithets, and to his government, principles which make him odious. The heathens called Jupiter the greatest and the best; but his history was black with cruelty and lust." This is the very reply which the author of the sermon makes in so many words, to the most serious professions of the orthodox, whoever they may be, as to their belief in the *moral perfection of God*. If he does not mean to apply what I have quoted to the *orthodox*, he has lost sight of the object of his discourse, and his subsequent reasoning is wholly impertinent. If he does mean thus to apply it, he does an act of the most flagrant injustice.

In another form, he afterwards repeats insinuations of the same sort. "*We* believe," he says,—"*We*," emphatically, and by way of distinction from the orthodox,—"*We* believe that in no being is the sense of right so strong, so omnipotent, as in God. We believe that his almighty power is entirely submitted to his perception of rectitude. It is not because he is our Creator merely, but because he created us for good and holy purposes; it is not because his will is irresistible, but because his will is the perfection of virtue, that we pay him allegiance. We cannot bow before a being, however great and powerful, who governs tyrannically. We respect nothing but excellence, whether on earth or in heaven."

Now the whole body of enlightened Christians who embrace the common orthodox faith, give their united testimony to the same truths, and declare their veneration and love for a God of the same amiable character. In their creeds, systems, sermons, psalmody, and prayers, they abundantly assert these very views respecting the *moral perfection of God.* They have asserted them continually. They have taught them to their children. They have repeated them in a thousand forms. And yet this author, speaking in your name too, feels himself entitled to say to them all in reply;—"It is very possible to speak of God magnificently, and to think of him meanly. Your system takes from us our Father in heaven, and substitutes for him a being, whom we cannot love if we would, and whom we ought not to love if we could." *Candor* and *liberality of mind* are virtues which Unitarians have considered peculiarly honorable, and which they have appeared ambitious to advance to the highest degree of influence. I would just inquire, whether these virtues are likely to be improved, or to acquire greater influence, either among Unitarians, or the orthodox, by such language as this author uses respecting his opponents,—language characterized by strength and elegance, but entirely wanting in justice and truth. We claim the right of thinking for ourselves, and of declaring what we think. But according to the principle which seems to govern this writer's pen, there would be no possibility

of our ever making a declaration of our opinions which would be entitled to credit. For suppose we should profess our full assent to the strongest propositions of this author respecting the moral perfection of God; suppose we should say the very things which he says, in the same forms, and in different forms, and should enlarge upon them, and carry them into their practical uses, and should show by our conduct, that such are our sober views of the divine character; he could still meet all this with the reply; — "It is possible to apply to God's person high sounding epithets, and to his government, principles which make him odious. The heathens called Jupiter the greatest and the best; but his history was black with cruelty and lust." If the picture which this author has drawn of our opinions on this subject, were chargeable with only a little misrepresentation; or if it were ever so great a misrepresentation on a subject of no considerable importance; it would be worthy of little notice. But it is a great and total misrepresentation on a subject of vital consequence to religion, both theoretic and practical. And every man, and every child, who has received his impression from this sermon, as to the views of the orthodox on the subject now before us, has been led into a palpable and total mistake touching a matter of fact, — a matter of fact, concerning which the orthodox are the only competent judges. To them I appeal. And I am sure they will be sensible of the truth of what I say, and will be compelled, from a sense of justice to themselves to declare, that, however free from blame the *motives* of this author may have been, the representation he has here made of their views, is totally incorrect.

LETTER III.

Respected Friends,

I would not have you infer from anything contained in the foregoing letter, that I am desirous of avoiding that kind of investigation, which the author of the sermon has represented, as necessary in this case. "We cannot," he remarks, "judge of men's real ideas of God from their general language. We must inquire into their particular views of his purposes, of the principles of his administration, and of his disposition towards his creatures." To this mode of proceeding I cheerfully accede. Accordingly, I will not ask you to rest ultimately on my bare assertion, that Unitarians give an incorrect account of our opinions, nor upon my *general* declaration, that we believe in the *moral perfection of God.* That you may be under the best advantages to judge, whether we do in fact believe in the moral perfection of God, I will state summarily, what *particular* views we entertain of God's character, — "of the principles of his administration, and of his disposition towards his creatures."

The sentiment, which forms the basis of our system, is, that God is love. This declaration of Scripture we understand in its plain and obvious sense, and believe it happily expresses the whole moral character of God. *He is a Being of infinite and perfect benevolence.* This is the disposition of God toward his creatures; the disposition which prompted him to create, and which prompts him to govern. The object of benevolence or goodness is, to do good, to promote real happiness. The object of *infinite* benevolence must be to promote the *highest degree* of happiness. As to the ways, in which God will secure the greatest amount of happiness to his intelligent creation, we can know nothing except what God is pleased to reveal. So far as our duty or comfort is concerned, he has given us instruction. According to the Scriptures, the grand means, by which God will promote the happiness

of his kingdom, is the administration of a *moral government.* Such a government implies a law, enforced by proper sanctions, that is, by the promise of good to the obedient, and the threat of evil to the disobedient. These promises and threats, being necessary parts of a benevolent moral government, are expressions of the divine goodness. So is the execution of them. The proper punishment of the disobedient, as it is essential to the administration of a perfect moral government, is in reality an act of goodness, — an expression of God's benevolent regard to his kingdom. When there is occasion for it, a *good father* will *punish.* He may punish not only *consistently* with his being good, but *because* he is good. God is a father to his kingdom; and will therefore show his displeasure against that which tends to injure that kingdom. As to the degree and duration of the punishment which will be inflicted on transgressors, we are, of ourselves, wholly incompetent to judge; for the obvious reason, that we are not capable of knowing what the present and future interests of so extensive a kingdom require. The Scriptures teach, that God will inflict on the wicked a great and everlasting punishment. So far as reasoning is concerned, we believe this as a consequence of believing, that God will feel and manifest displeasure against sin in proportion to the strength of the love which he feels for his kingdom. In other words, we believe he will inflict on the disobedient that very punishment, which they deserve, and which, in his view, the welfare of his kingdom renders necessary. We consider the demerit of sin to be great, in proportion to the moral excellence of God against whom it is committed, and to the value of those interests which it aims to destroy. Here you see why we view *punitive justice* as a branch of *benevolence*, an exercise of *goodness.* As God is a moral Governor, and the Guardian of the interests of the creation, the want of justice in punishing offences would betray the want of goodness. Thus we believe, as Unitarians do, that the justice of God "is the justice of a good being, dwelling in the same mind and acting in harmony with perfect benevolence." The author referred to represents the belief, "that justice and mercy are intimate friends, breathing the

same spirit, and seeking the same end," as peculiar to Unitarians; though it is in truth the general belief of the orthodox. But in case of transgression, justice and mercy must seek the same ultimate end in different ways. In the exercise of *justice*, God seeks the happiness of his kingdom by *punishing* an offence; in the exercise of *mercy* or *grace*, by *forgiving* an offence. This author says, "God's mercy, as we understand it, desires strongly the happiness of the guilty." We believe the same. But he adds a condition. "God's mercy desires strongly the happiness of the guilty, *but only through their penitence.*" We go farther. We believe, indeed, that repentance is essential to the happiness of the guilty; but we believe also, because we are so taught in the Scriptures, that repentance itself, without the death of a Mediator, could be of no avail. To forgive sin in any other way, than through *the shedding of blood*, would not consist with a due regard to "the interests of virtue," and so, to use this author's language, "would be incompatible with justice, and also with enlightened benevolence." On the other hand, we think it equally clear that the happiness of the *impenitent* would be not only inconsistent with the divine perfections, but in the nature of things impossible.

We believe as sincerely as Unitarians do, in the *paternal character* of God. You "ascribe to him," as this author informs us, "not only the name, but the dispositions and principles of a father." With the qualifications which the divine perfection itself renders necessary, we do the same. The language refers to the dispositions of a *human* father. These dispositions belong to God, *so far as is consistent with his infinite perfection.* It is plain, that the dispositions of God and the conduct flowing from them cannot, in *all* respects, resemble the dispositions and conduct of a human father. The nature of a human father, and the relation he sustains to his children, have but an imperfect analogy to the nature of God, and the relation he sustains to his creatures. From this we conclude, that his treatment of his creatures cannot be fully represented by the treatment, which a human father gives his children. This may be illustrated by the following examples.

What human father, possessing even a common degree of paternal kindness and compassion, would ever treat his children, as God treated his rational offspring, when he destroyed the world by a deluge, or Sodom by fire, or when he caused the earth to open and swallow up the company of Korah? Would a compassionate father drown his children, or consume them by fire, or bury them alive in the earth? God suffers his creatures, even harmless children, to die of hunger or sickness, or to be destroyed by acts of cruelty. Could a human father stand and see his children die thus, when it was in the power of his hand to afford relief? I mention these, among a thousand instances, to prove that the analogy between God and a human father, though very striking and delightful, is not perfect, and may be carried too far. Most certainly it is carried too far by those, who undertake to prove what God will do or will not do as to the punishment of the wicked in the future world, by the consideration that he is called *a father*. The analogy implied in this metaphor must be guarded and kept within due limits, as carefully as the analogy implied in the metaphors by which God is called a fire, or a man of war. It is not necessary here to dwell upon the principles which we apply in the interpretation of metaphorical language. I will only say that we can be in no danger of mistake, if we fix upon the analogy which is suggested by the metaphor itself, and by the manifest design of the writer, and limit the analogy, as we commonly do, by the knowledge we have obtained of the subject from other sources. On these principles, the soundness of which will not be called in question, we look to God as a father; we love him and trust in him as a father. We believe he has a paternal affection for his rational offspring, and takes delight in promoting their welfare. Nay more; we believe that the love of God is not only sincere and durable, like that of a father, but is free from all human imperfection, and distinguished by a purity, elevation, and activity, infinitely superior to what belongs to the love of the best father on earth.

I cannot do justice to orthodox ministers without adding, that their belief in the moral excellence of God is not a matter of mere

speculation, but is in the highest degree practical. They make the infinite and immutable goodness of God the grand motive to religious worship, — the ground of all pious affections. They present it to the view of Christians to excite love, gratitude, and joy. They present it to the view of sinners, to show them the inexcusable guilt and baseness of their disaffection to their Maker, and to induce them to return to him by repentance. They dwell upon the unchangeable love of God, which has a length and breadth and depth and height passing all understanding, as the source of joy in prosperity, of comfort in affliction, and triumph in death. And they lead Christians to expect, that their highest enjoyments in heaven will arise from the more glorious display which God will there make, of his infinite benignity and grace.

It would be great injustice to orthodox ministers and Christians, both in Europe and America, to pass over the influence, which their belief in the divine goodness has, to produce *benevolent action.* It is because they believe that *God is love*, and that he is ready to pardon and save all who repent, that they are engaged in such plans of benevolence, and are striving to enlighten and convert the world. In these benevolent efforts, they are aiming at a humble imitation of him, who is the supreme object of their veneration and love.

Now when I consider what stress the orthodox lay upon the moral perfection of God, the variety of ways in which they acknowledge and affirm it, and the paramount influence which it has upon their conduct; I am not a little surprised that any man should charge them with denying it. It is the *very last* thing they would deny. I appeal to millions of witnesses, who will tell you, that they are as far from denying the *moral perfection* of God, as they are from denying his *existence*, and that his existence itself would not only cease to afford them satisfaction, but would fill them with anxiety and dread, had they not a certain belief, that he is possessed of perfect rectitude, of unbounded and unchangeable goodness. And after the statement I have now made, and similar statements made by others, of the sentiments of the orthodox on this subject, I leave it to you to judge, what occasion

the author of this sermon could have for saying what he does in the following passage: "We ask our opponents to leave us a God, worthy of our love and trust, in whom our moral sentiments may delight, in whom our weaknesses and sorrows may find refuge."

LETTER IV.

Respected Friends,

I now ask your attention more particularly to the *manner*, in which the author of this sermon attempts to make it appear, that we deny the moral perfection of God. If I understand him right, he infers our denial of God's moral perfection from our "particular views of his purposes, of the principles of his administration, and of his disposition towards his creatures."

Now if we admit, for the present, that our views on these subjects are in reality inconsistent with the moral perfection of God; still the allegation here brought against us may not be just. For I may *really believe* a certain important doctrine, though I believe other things inconsistent with it. The *consistency* of my belief is one thing; the *reality* of it, another. I may entertain various opinions which, if examined thoroughly, would appear inconsistent with my belief of some important truth; yet the inconsistency may not be apparent to me; and I may as really believe that important truth, and act as much under its influence, as though I did not entertain those other opinions. In such a case, though an opponent might attack me on the ground of my *consistency*, he could not, with any justice, represent me as *denying* that particular truth. Accordingly, the most which this author could properly say, even on the free admission above supposed, would be, that we do not believe the moral perfection of God *consistently*, though we may believe it *really*.

But can we be justly charged with entertaining opinions, which are, in fact, inconsistent with our belief in the moral perfection of God? This is the question now to be considered. The author of the sermon seems to rest the charge chiefly on two points; first, the doctrine we hold as to the *natural character of man;* second, the doctrine we hold, as to *the manner in which God designates the heirs of salvation.* I shall begin with the first.

Here allow me to remark with freedom, on the *mode of reasoning* which ought to be pursued on such a subject as this. I am happy to find the following principle suggested in the sermon. "Whatever doctrines seem to us to be clearly taught in the Scriptures, we receive without reserve or exception." Right. But does the author adhere to his own principle? With respect to the common doctrine of man's depravity, the grand inquiry which ought to have engaged his attention, was this: *Do the Scriptures, understood according to just rules of interpretation, teach the doctrine? And does the doctrine agree with the facts made known by experience and observation?* All reasoning *a priori*, in this case especially, is to be rejected. And so is every hypothesis, unless it is evidently founded on Scripture and observation. Independently of revelation and well known facts, *we are actually incapable of judging what the goodness of God will require as to the condition of man; or what man's character and state will be under the government of a being infinitely wise and benevolent.* Our inability to judge on the subject might be made evident, from the impossibility of our having any adequate knowledge respecting either the infinite perfection of God, or the vast and endless scheme of his operations. But without any labored argument to prove what must be so plain to every intelligent man, it will be sufficient for my present purpose to refer to a few other facts, which are quite as different from what we should have previously thought agreeable to the perfections of God, as the moral depravity of man. Who would have supposed that a God of tender compassion and unbounded goodness would send plagues, hurricanes, and earthquakes, and involve multitudes of affectionate parents, and multitudes of lovely, helpless children in a sudden and

dreadful destruction? Who would have thought that the Lord of the universe, who has an absolute control over all creatures and all events, would suffer the cruelties and horrors of the *Slave-trade* to exist for so long a time? These are great difficulties. But there is one still greater; namely; *that the God of love, who delights in mercy and would have all men to be saved, and who has given his Son to die for the redemption of the world, should after all suffer the greater part of the world to live and die without any knowledge of the Saviour.* These facts, which are known to all, are as far from being agreeable to what we should naturally imagine the infinite goodness of God would dictate, as the fact, that men are subjects of moral depravity. But our being unable, by the mere exercise of reason, to discover the consistency between these facts and the goodness of God, is no proof that the facts do not exist, and no proof that they are in reality inconsistent with divine goodness. With regard to all subjects like these, the only mode of reasoning, which can be relied upon to lead us to right conclusions, is that which is pursued in the science of physics. Regulating ourselves by the maxims of Bacon and Newton, we inquire, not what we should expect the properties and laws of the physical world would be, nor whether this or that thing can be reconciled with the infinite wisdom and goodness of God, but simply, *what is fact? What do we find from observation and experience, that the properties and laws of nature really are?* This inquiry should be perfectly unembarrassed by any other matters. The moment we undertake to shape the conclusions we adopt, or the facts we discover, so as to make them conform to any preconceived opinion, we depart from the legitimate rule of philosophical research, and expose ourselves to endless perplexity and error. I might, if necessary, fill a volume with examples of the vagaries of human reason, flowing from the neglect of this grand principle of philosophy. The importance of this principle, and the hurtful consequences of disregarding it, are now admitted by all enlightened philosophers. And it is to the strict observance of it, that we owe our present advancement in the science of *physics.*

Now this principle is as applicable to the science of *theology*, as

to the science of *physics*. Indeed, it will be found that in theology it is still more necessary, and that any departure from it is attended with still greater danger, than in physics. *Theology*, as well as *philosophy*, is founded on facts. The first thing to be done in either case is to determine, by the proper method of inquiry, what are the facts on which the science is founded. In philosophy we learn facts by observation and experience. In theology we have additional aid. Revelation, as well as observation and experience, makes known facts, which form the basis of theological science. But in both cases, the chief object of inquiry and the rule of reasoning are the same. We first inquire for facts; and by reasoning from facts, we arrive at general truths. If in either case we neglect this principle of reasoning, we are involved in uncertainty, confusion, and error. Suppose a man attempts to prove, from what he thinks divine wisdom or benevolence must dictate, or from what he knows of some other subject, that all parts of the earth must enjoy equal illumination and warmth from the influence of the sun, and must afford equal advantages and comforts to the inhabitants. But what becomes of his arguments, when he looks abroad, and compares the rocks and ice and gloomy nights of Greenland, or the sands of Arabia, with the pleasantness and fertility of some other parts of the earth? Or suppose he assumes what must be the nature of any particular thing, but afterwards finds, that the phenomena which that thing exhibits do not correspond with his assumption. Shall he deny or disregard those phenomena? Or shall he not rather dismiss his assumption? Now it is not a whit less unphilosophical, to admit any presumptive or hypothetical reasoning in *ethics* or *theology*, than in the science of *physics*. Suppose we think it inconsistent with the infinite goodness of God, that he should create an order of rational beings, and place them in such circumstances of temptation, as he certainly knew would be followed by their transgression and ruin; or that a God of infinite power, who has all hearts and all events in his hand, should suffer mankind, through a hundred generations, to be in a state of ignorance, rebellion, and wretchedness, when it is easy for him to prevent it. But suppose

we find in both cases the existence of facts which we denied. Shall we deny them still? It is true we may not be able to reconcile them with the perfections of God. What then? Are we omniscient? Is our understanding above the possibility of mistake?

These remarks are intended to simplify our inquiry with regard to the native character of man. They are intended to show that, according to the just principles of reasoning, we have nothing to do with the question, how the common doctrine of depravity can consist with the moral perfection of God? If I say, *this doctrine cannot be true* because I cannot reconcile it with the goodness of God, it is the same as saying, *I am an infallible judge*, and my opinion must stand, though opposed by the declarations of Scripture and the evidence of facts. To take such a position would be an effectual bar to conviction, and render all reasoning useless. If we would regulate our investigations on this subject by correct principles, we must reject totally every prepossession against the doctrine of depravity, and must restrict ourselves to this single inquiry, *what is true in fact?* If the subject is one on which the Scripture gives us information, the question is, *what saith the Scripture?* If experience and observation cast any light on the subject, the question is, what do *they* teach? If we find that the Scripture, interpreted without the influence of any prepossession, and according to just rules, teaches that man is by nature unholy, this must unhesitatingly be admitted as a certain truth. That God declares it, is proof sufficient. His testimony is a better foundation for our faith, than all our reasonings. If observation and experience teach the same truth, we are to admit it as doubly confirmed. As to the *goodness of God*, we know it from other evidence. The truth under consideration must then be admitted to be in reality consistent with the goodness of God, however hard it may be for those who are of yesterday and know nothing, to elucidate that consistency.

The subject under consideration is one, on which we are peculiarly liable to judge erroneously, for the obvious reason that we

have a personal concern in it. We are among those, whom the commonly received doctrine arraigns as polluted and guilty. The doctrine touches our character and our honor. It aims a blow at our self-esteem. It disturbs our quiet. The consideration of these circumstances should excite us to guard vigilantly against that prejudice, that discoloring of evidence and that partial judgment, to which we are all in such a case exposed.

LETTER V.

Respected Friends,

The doctrine, which the orthodox hold on the subject introduced in the last Letter, is briefly this; *that men are by nature destitute of holiness;* or that they are subjects of an *innate moral depravity;* in other words, that they are from the first inclined to evil, and that, while unrenewed, their moral affections and actions are wholly wrong. The doctrine is merely the assertion of a general fact. I shall at present consider this fact by itself, entirely unencumbered with any question about the occasion or the mode of it.

It is far from my design to exhibit, in detail, the arguments by which this doctrine is proved. I shall attain my object, if I can succeed in exposing a wrong method of reasoning, and can do anything towards producing in those who may honor me with their attention, a steady desire to know the truth, and a disposition to investigate the subject of man's natural character on right principles, and without being shackled by unreasonable prepossessions. But the case seems to require that I should lay before you, if not all the particular proofs, at least the general topics of argument, on which I ground my conclusion. Here, then, I contend, and hold myself ready to demonstrate, that there is no principle in

natural science, which is established by evidence more uniform and more conclusive, than the moral depravity of man. I speak now of the evidence which is furnished by experience and observation, without looking to the Bible. The appearances of human nature, from infancy to old age, and from the fall of Adam to the present time, prove a deep-rooted and universal disease. The existence of this moral disease is practically acknowledged by all, who have any concern in the education of children and youth, or who endeavor in any way to bring the actions of men to conform to the rule of duty. The strength of this disease is made evident by all the restraints which parents are obliged to put upon their children, rulers upon their subjects, and all men who aim at being virtuous, upon themselves. This disorder of our nature is indicated by as clear, as various, and as uniform symptoms, as ever indicated the existence of a fever or a consumption in an individual. The evidence of human depravity from this source alone is so great, that, should I reject it as insufficient, I should manifest a strength of prejudice which, I soberly think, no increase of evidence could overcome. And I would propose it as a serious question, whether, if any of us should stand by as impartial spectators, and see in another order of beings, the same indications of character which we see in the human species, we should hesitate a moment to pronounce them *depraved.*

But as our views of this subject must depend chiefly on revelation, I shall proceed to exhibit, though very summarily, the *principal Scripture arguments*, on which the doctrine of man's depravity rests. I shall first present the argument, or rather *the principle of reasoning*, from the *Old Testament.* For this purpose I take a single passage, which may stand for a multitude of the same nature. Gen. 6: 5, "*And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*"

It is objected to the argument commonly drawn from this text, that it related to mankind in a season of uncommon corruption, and not to mankind at large, and that it is altogether improper to infer the character of the whole human race from the shocking

barbarity and wickedness, which have been perpetrated in a particular age or country. The same objection is thought to lie against our reasoning from any passages in the Old Testament, in which human wickedness is declared; namely, that they related exclusively to particular times when iniquity prevailed to an uncommon degree, and cannot be applied to mankind generally.

We now inquire whether this objection is valid.

The text quoted from Gen. 6: 5, did indeed relate to the corruption of men who lived before the general deluge. But we find substantially the same testimony given soon after the deluge. Gen. 8: 21, "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth. There are two reasons for considering this as relating to *mankind universally*, or to *human nature*. The first is, that the language is *general*. "The imagination of *man's* heart is evil;" not Noah's heart, nor the heart of either of his sons, but *man's* heart, the heart of the *human kind*. Thus we are led to consider it as the testimony of God respecting the character of our race. The second reason for this construction is, that the *curse* spoken of in the same verse related to mankind in all future ages. "I will not again curse the ground any more for *man's sake;*"—"neither will I again smite any more every living thing, as I have done." It was said in relation to all future time. The description given of man's character must be understood as equally extensive; "*for*," or more properly, "*though* the imagination of *man's* heart is evil from his youth." The meaning of the whole taken together is plainly this; that God would not destroy the world again by a deluge, as he had done, though the character of mankind generally would be as it had been. History shows that it has been so in fact.

Further to illustrate the force of the argument from the Old Testament, and the weakness of the objection against it, I refer my readers to a well known principle of science, namely, *that all who belong to the same species, have the same nature.* We always consider the actions of any part, certainly of any considerable part of a species, as indicating the character or nature of the whole. And why should we doubt the truth of this principle in

relation to man's moral character, any more than in relation to his physical properties, or to the properties of any other order of creatures? In all our treatment of mankind, and in all our maxims of practical wisdom, we admit the principle, that *human nature*, as to its essential moral features, is at all times and in all circumstances the same. This is implied also in the fact, that the same precepts, motives, and restraints, in a word, the same moral discipline, has been found suitable and necessary in all ages.

But I do not stop here, but proceed to inquire, whether the *New Testament*, besides furnishing a new argument, does not give testimony to the soundness of the argument from the *Old Testament*. The Psalmist, in Psalm xiv, liii, v, cxl, x, xxxvi, and Isaiah, ch. xlix, describe the wickedness which prevailed in their day. "They are corrupt; they have done abominable works; there is none that doeth good. They are all gone aside, they are together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre. Their feet run to evil. Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; The way of peace they know not." The objector says, these passages described the corruption of the Jews in times of great degeneracy, and cannot be considered as a just description of mankind generally. But how does the Apostle Paul treat the subject? He takes these same passages, a thousand years afterwards, and applies them, as descriptive of the character of Jews and Gentiles. Rom. 3: 9, he says, referring to ch. i. and ii, "We have before proved both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, that *they* are *all* under sin; *as it is written*,"—immediately introducing from the Old Testament the texts above quoted, as a true account of the character of mankind without exception; then stating the end he had aimed at in making such a disclosure of the human character; namely, "that *every mouth* may be stopped, and *all the world* become guilty before God;" and then directly bringing us to his final conclusion, that "by the deeds of the law shall *no flesh* be justified in his sight." It is a connected discourse, an unbroken chain of reasoning. And unless the texts, which the Apostle here cites from the Old Testament, are justly

applicable to the whole race of man, "both Jews and Gentiles," and, in connection with the preceding part of his Epistle, are a true description of "*all the world*," "*no flesh*" being excepted; the whole reasoning of the Apostle is without force; his conclusion is broader than his premises; and the quotations he makes from the Scriptures are not only *no proofs* of what he wishes to establish, but have no kind of relation to it. The point he labors to establish is, that "*both Jews* and *Gentiles*"—that "*all the world*" have such a character, that they cannot be justified by law. But what is their character? It is that which is first described in the preceding part of the Epistle, and then in the passages cited from the Old Testament. "We have before proved *both Jews and Gentiles*, that they are all under sin, *as it is written; There is none that doeth good, no, not one. They are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable*," etc. The Apostle cites these texts, for the very purpose of describing more particularly than he had done, the character of "*all the world.*" It might indeed be thought from the first part of v. 19, "whatsoever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law," that the Apostle meant to apply what he had just before said, to *Jews only*. But this would hardly agree with the scope of the passage, which was to establish a general truth respecting "*all the world.*" Besides, the first part of v. 19 will easily admit a construction perfectly corresponding with the scope of the whole passage. The Apostle would prove that *all* men are under sin. The *Jews* would naturally make an exception in their own favor. He tells them that there can be no exception; that what he has quoted from *the law*, that is, from their own Scriptures, must certainly relate to *Jews*, as well *as to Gentiles*. The quotations cannot relate to Jews *exclusively* of Gentiles, because that would not agree with the manner in which the quotations are introduced;—"We have proved *both Jews and Gentiles*, that they are *all* under sin; *as it is written*," etc. Nor does it so obviously agree with the conclusion v. 19, which relates to "*all the world.*" Besides, it is difficult not to believe that the writer of some of the Psalms quoted, particularly of the xivth, extended his views beyond his own

nation, though he undoubtedly referred to them primarily, and in a special sense. When he introduces that description of wickedness which is quoted by the Apostle, his language is general. "The Lord looked down from heaven, upon *the children of men,* to see if there were *any* that did understand." The Psalmist then proceeds to give a description, not of the posterity of Abraham *solely*, but of *the children of men*, *the human race*, and says, *they are all gone aside.* But we shall come ultimately to the same conclusion, if we admit that the passages were originally intended by the Psalmist to relate merely to his own nation. For if such a character belonged to that highly favored nation, it must of course have belonged to the rest of the world. So the Apostle decides when he attributes that description of character to *all the world.* On the same principle the passages quoted by him are applicable to *us*, as well as to those who lived in the time of Paul, or of David; as applicable to us, as what the Apostle says respecting justification, salvation, duty, or anything else.

This manner of quoting texts from the Old Testament is not peculiar to Paul. We find frequent examples of it in the instructions of Christ himself. The Prophet Isaiah, chap. 29: 13, had given the following description of the hypocrisy of the people, who were contemporary with him; viz., "that they drew near to God with their mouth, and honored him with their lips, but had removed their hearts far from him." Jesus quoted this passage as *applicable to the Jews in his day.* "Well did Esaias prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written," etc. In the same manner Christ repeatedly quoted Isa. 6: 9, 10, as a true description of the obstinate impiety of those who rejected his gospel.

Now this manner of quoting and reasoning from Scripture, so often employed both by Christ and his apostles, clearly involves the principle, that *human nature*, in all ages and circumstances, is, *as to its grand moral features*, the same, and that the dispositions and actions, which mankind at any time exhibit, are real indications of what belongs to the *nature of man universally.* Unless this principle is admitted, how can the Apostle be justified in making such a use as he does of his citations from the Old

Testament? And to bring the subject nearer home, how can we make use of anything which was said of the character of man, either in the Old Testament or the New, as appertaining to those who live at the present day? Indeed, how can any of the declarations of the Bible, all of which were made so many ages ago, be of any use to us, except to gratify curiosity? Whether therefore we consider the nature of the case, or the reasoning of the Apostle in Rom. iii; are we not warranted to receive whatever the Bible in any part affirms respecting the dispositions or conduct of men, as applicable, *substantially*, to men in all ages? If we are not, what can we say to vindicate the Apostle? If we are, then the text I first quoted from Genesis, and those texts which are quoted from the Psalms in Rom. iii, and other similar texts in the Old Testament, do all illustrate the character which now belongs to man. And when we read in the Bible, or elsewhere, the highest description of human wickedness in the old world, in Sodom, in Canaan, in Jerusalem, in Greece, Rome, or India, or of the wickedness of individuals, as Pharaoh, Saul, Jeroboam, Judas, or the Caesars; it is perfectly just and natural for us to reflect, *such is human nature; such is man.* So that orthodox writers, though they may not in all instances have attended sufficiently to the grounds of their argument, do in fact reason in an unexceptionable manner, when they undertake to show what *human nature* is, from the description which is given of the wickedness of man in the Old Testament; and the objection to this reasoning, which I stated above, and which is the objection of Dr. Turnbull and Dr. John Taylor, cannot be considered as valid.

Let me hint at the confirmation which may be given to the general principle, asserted above, by an appeal to the sober convictions of men. They who are in the habit of comparing their moral affections and conduct with the perfect law of God, will have no difficulty in acknowledging, that they find, in the various representations of human depravity contained in the Old Testament, a true picture of themselves. I say not that they are conscious of having committed sinful actions in *the same form*, or indulged sinful passions *in the same degree*, with all those whose

crimes are recorded in the Bible. But they are conscious of having in their hearts a wrong bias, a want of what the divine law requires, of the *same nature* with the moral depravation of the greatest sinners. The sacred writers impute to various societies and individuals, pride, selfishness, idolatry, covetousness, impurity, revenge, falsehood, blasphemy. Have we not discovered in ourselves the root of all these vices? Should we not be liable to actual excess in every one of them, if we should be freed from restraints, and should follow, without any counteracting influence, the desires which naturally spring up in our hearts? And have not the greatest proficients in self-government and holiness always been the most ready to make this humiliating confession? Even some of the heathen, who made serious attempts to improve their own character, were forced to acknowledge that the disorder of their nature was too stubborn to be subdued by them without help from above.

It is certainly nothing conclusive against the principle contended for, that some men can be found, who are not sensible of its truth in relation to themselves. This may easily be accounted for without in the least invalidating the principle. For they may be altogether inattentive to what passes in their own minds, and so may be ignorant of themselves; or if they are attentive to the operations of their own minds, they may fix their eye upon some of the wrong standards of duty which are set up in the world, and so may judge incorrectly. It is surely no uncommon thing for men to be insensible of their faults, especially of the evil affections of their hearts. This insensibility, so frequently described in the Scriptures, is a matter of common observation, and has always been regarded as one of the greatest hinderances to the influence of divine truth.

The argument from the Old Testament might be extended to great length, comprising all the positive declarations there made and all the examples there exhibited of human wickedness; all the confessions both of saints and sinners; all the means employed to subdue the moral corruption of men and hold them back from sin, and everything else which showed formerly, and which always

shows, *what is in man.* They who read the Old Testament with such views as the apostles entertained, will be constantly improving their acquaintance with themselves, their knowledge of their own moral degradation, and their desire after that gracious influence of the Holy Spirit which renews and exalts the soul.

LETTER VI.

Respected friends,

In the last Letter, I confined myself chiefly to the establishment of a general principle, and to the proof which, according to that principle, may be drawn from the Old Testament, in support of the doctrine of man's moral depravity. In pursuance of my objects I might refer to such a passage as Jer. 16: 9. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" "*The heart*" not of any man in particular, but of *man universally.* The next verse confirms this sense. "I the Lord search *the heart;*" — the same heart, as the one spoken of in v. 9: so that if, when the Prophet says, the Lord searches *the heart*, we are to understand him as meaning, that the Lord searches *the heart universally*, or *the heart of every human being;* then also, when in the closest connection with this, he says, *the heart* is deceitful and wicked, we must understand him as meaning that *the heart universally*, or *the heart of every human being* is deceitful and wicked. This is the only sense which any man can give the text, v. 9, who attends to its connection with the following verse, or considers what language we commonly use to express a general or universal proposition. Another passage containing a universal proposition of like character, is found in Eccles. 9: 3, "*The heart* of the *sons of men* is full of evil."

But in the New Testament every thing is invested with clearer light. Here we find evidence, exhibited in many different forms,

that *man* as a *species*, the *human kind*, is sunk in sin, and while unrenewed, entirely destitute of holiness and unfit for heaven. This evidence I shall now lay before you, though it must be with great brevity, and in reference only to a few passages.

The first passage to which I would call your attention, is found in the discourse of Jesus with Nicodemus, John 3: 1—7. This conversation took place near the beginning of Christ's ministry. About four thousand years had passed away from the fall of man. Those four thousand years had furnished clear evidence of the human character. The corruption and violence of the old world had been seen. And notwithstanding the tremendous purgation which the world underwent by the general deluge, the new race, descending from righteous Noah, had pursued the same downward course with the generations before the flood. The same had been the case with the posterity of Abraham. Although various and powerful means had been used to restrain mankind from wickedness and induce them to serve God, they had in every nation, and in every age, shown themselves prone to evil. Jesus was aware of all this. He knew what was in man. The result of what his all searching eye had seen and then saw of the character of the human race, he expressed to Nicodemus; "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." The moral renovation here spokon of, is represented as necessary for all men. *Ἐάν μή τις γεννηθῇ ἄνωθεν.* The sense is, that *no man, no human being*, who is not the subject of this renovation, can be a partaker of the benefits of Christ's kingdom. The necessity of this renovation, as appears afterwards, arises from the character which man possesses in consequence of his *natural birth.* Of course it is necessary for every child of Adam. "That which is born of the flesh, is *flesh.*" "By *flesh*," says Rosenmüller, in agreement with commentators generally, "is meant the nature of man, — man with all his moral imperfection, subject to the dominion of his bodily appetites. And he who is born of parents who have this moral imperfection, is like his parents." All the children of men are here represented as having, by their very birth, a moral nature, which renders them incapable of enjoying the

blessings of the Messiah's kingdom, unless they are *born again.* This interpretation is confirmed by all those texts, in which the word *flesh* or *fleshly*, is used to express the opposite of that which is spiritual or holy. The metaphorical expression, being *born again*, must denote a *moral* change, because it is a change that fits men for a *moral* or *spiritual kingdom.* If we view this passage in connection with those, which represent repentance and conversion as necessary to prepare men for Christ's kingdom, we shall see that being *born again* denotes a change of the same general character with *repentance* and *conversion.* It is then clear, that this passage of Scripture, interpreted according to just rules, contains the following sentiment; — that *all men, without exception, are by nature*, or in consequence of their natural birth, in such a state of moral degeneracy, as will exclude them from the enjoyments of heaven, unless they are renewed by the Holy Spirit.

Rom. 5: 12, "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that *all have sinned.*" Here two things are perfectly clear. 1. That the Apostle considered sin as *the cause of death*, or the reason why God sent into the world the evils involved in *death.* 2. That as sin is the *cause* of *death*, the extent of the one must be measured by the extent of the other. Determine how far *death* extends, and you determine how far *sin* extends. If a part of the human species die, a part are sinners. If all die, all are sinners. "Death passed upon all men, *for that* all have sinned." *Εφ' ὡ*, according to the judgment of eminent critics, and the use of the phrase elsewhere in the New Testament, means the same as *διοτι*, —*for that*, or *because.* We think we have the best reason to believe that in respect of *character* and *condition*, there is a connection between Adam and the whole human race. Nor do we, as the author of the sermon seems to think, rest this opinion on "a few slight hints about the fall of our first parents," but upon the plain, and reiterated declaration of the Apostle Paul in Rom. v. Notwithstanding all the difficulty with which this passage is attended, there is one point, which the inspired writer

makes known in different forms of expression, and with the greatest perspicuity, namely, that a connection really exists between the father of the human race and all his children. Unless Adam's transgression had such a relation to his posterity that, in consequence of it, they were constituted sinners, and subjected to death and other sufferings, as penal evils, the Apostle reasons inconclusively, and entirely misses the end he aims at in his comparison of Adam and Christ.*

Though it would not be consistent with the plan of these Letters to collect the various passages of the New Testament which prove what man's native character is; I cannot willingly leave the subject without adverting again to the manner, in which the Apostle Paul was accustomed to treat it. From many pertinent texts I take one. Eph. 2: 3. "Among whom also we all had our conversation, etc. and were *by nature children of wrath, even as others.*" He says this of believing *Jews*, as is evident from

* When I wrote these Letters to Unitarians, I had a different opinion from that which I now entertain respecting the meaning of the word *imputation*, or *impute.* In conformity with many excellent ministers of the gospel in New England, I had been accustomed to give the word a signification widely different from that which it evidently bears in the Scriptures, and in the writings of standard Calvinistic divines generally. The word, as I now understand it, is properly used to express the effects of Adam's sin upon his posterity, and of the righteousness of Christ upon believers. So it is used by the great body of orthodox Protestants. So it is used in the Assembly's Shorter Catechism, respecting the righteousness of Christ. I consider the word as denoting the very doctrine which is repeatedly and very plainly expressed in Rom. 5: 12—19. When the Apostle says, that by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, — that through the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, and that through the obedience of one many were made righteous, that is, justified; he advances the very doctrine which the best writers intend to express, when they say that Adam's sin was *imputed* to his posterity, and that the righteousness of Christ is *imputed* to believers. Some distinguished divines in Great Britain, who touch upon this subject, charge New England writers with giving the word under consideration, an unauthorized sense. The fact, that the word has different meanings affixed to it among evangelical writers, has, in many instances, occasioned an appearance of difference in their belief, when there is none in reality. In the previous volumes, I have fully stated my views in regard to the proper meaning of the word *impute*, as well as the doctrine to which it has been applied. It will be seen that the change, in my opinion, respects merely the proper signification of the word. To adapt Letter VI. to my present views, I omit most of two paragraphs.

the beginning and the close of the verse, in connection with the context. To be *children of wrath*, according to Schleusner, Rosenmüller, Koppe, and others, is to be *worthy of punishment.* To be children of wrath *by nature*, is to be *born so*, or to be so in consequence of our birth, or in consequence of our *natural disposition.* Compare Gal. 2: 15, "We who are Jews *by nature*," i. e. *born Jews*, or *Jews by birth.* Φυσις, *nature*, points us to our *origin*, *nativity*, *birth.* Compare Ephes. 2: 3, with John 3: 6, "That which is *born of the flesh*, is flesh;" a declaration fairly capable of no meaning but this, that man, *by his natural birth*, *possesses a depraved disposition*, *corrupt desires.* So the word *flesh* signifies in every place where it relates to the moral character of men. That which is born of the flesh, or that which man has by nature, is such a temper or character, that he is a *child of wrath;* — such, that he must be the subject of a *new birth by the Spirit*, or he cannot see the kingdom of God. This we must regard as the meaning of these two passages taken together, unless we are driven, by our dislike of the doctrine contained in them, to violate the plainest rules of interpretation. If similar phraseology should be found on any other subject; — if, for example, it should be said, that which is born of *human parents* is *human*, or that which is born of *man* is *frail and liable to decay*, and that every man is, *by nature*, the subject of various appetites and passions; — who would not understand these phrases as denoting what man is, or what he has *by his birth*, what is *inbred* or *native?* Or if language should be used, expressing in the same way that which is opposite to what we understand by this text; that is, if it should be said that the children of men are *by nature pure*, or that what is born of human parents is *virtuous and holy;* would not our opposers think such a passage a clear proof of the *native purity*, the *inbred virtue of man?* And would they not be greatly "amazed" at the attempt of any man to put a different sense upon it?

That the human species is universally, while unrenewed, in a state of entire moral corruption, is implied in the invariable practice of the apostles to call upon men, "upon all men everywhere,

to *repent*." The duty and necessity of repentance, which denotes a radical moral change, was inculcated on all to whom the gospel was proclaimed. If, in any part of the world, an apostle found *human beings*, he instantly took it for granted that they were children of disobedience and children of wrath, and treated them accordingly — just as he took it for granted that they were mortal. All the provisions of the gospel are adapted to those who are polluted and guilty. If any can be found, whether old or young, who are not the subjects of moral depravity and ruin, they are evidently excluded from any concern with these provisions. When we pursue the history of the Christian religion through the days of the apostles, we find, wherever it produced its genuine effects, it produced *repentance, and fruits meet for repentance;* — it formed men to a new character; so that it became universally true, that if *any man* was a Christian, he was *a new creature*, was *born again*. We find no instance of the contrary. The character which Paul gives of the followers of Christ, implies that they had been *renewed*. He often turns their thoughts to their former state of degradation and ruin. He paints that state in the strongest colors. He illustrates it by the most striking metaphors. He reminds believers that, before regeneration, they were servants of sin, dead in trespasses and sins, enemies to God, impure, earthly. He speaks of this moral corruption, not as a fact which was local, or of limited extent, but universal. And accordingly he makes it a part of the general system of Christian doctrine.

There is a difficulty, I well know, in applying the description given by the Apostle of the character, which the first converts to Christianity originally possessed, to men of the present day, whose exterior character has been formed under the influence of a Christian education. But this difficulty disappears, when we attend to the principle which the Apostle recognizes in his reasoning, Rom. iii, and which I have already endeavored to illustrate; namely, that whatever difference may exist as to outward conduct, *all men have the same natural disposition, the same original ingredients of moral character*. On this principle, we pass by

what is merely regular and amiable in the eye of the world; we pass by all the diversities of exterior character, and look to the moral affections of the heart, in which all are alike. Agreeably to this view, and agreeably to what our Saviour says as to sin in the heart, Matt. 5: 21, 22, 28, it would appear that, although men have not, by formal acts, made themselves idolaters, thieves, adulterers, and murderers; they all possess those passions or dispositions, which, if indulged and acted out, would make them so. We have, then, the happiness of agreeing with the author of the sermon before us, who, in another ordination sermon, gives the following just description of the character of the human species: "To whom is the minister of the gospel sent to preach? To men of upright minds, disposed to receive and obey the truth which guides to heaven? Ah no! He is called to guide a wandering flock; he is sent to a *world of sinners*, in whose hearts lurk *idolatry, sensuality, pride, and every corruption.*" *

Men, who assert the native purity of human beings, insist much upon the harmlessness and tender sensibilities of little children before they are corrupted by example, and also upon the existence of what are called the natural affections in mankind generally. But how can those things, which remain the same whatever character man sustains, be considered as evidence of the purity of his moral nature?

The attempt, often made, to account for the universal prevalence of sin by the influence of example, without supposing any native bias to evil, cannot afford satisfaction. For we are still pressed with the difficulty of accounting for it, that children, whose nature is untainted with moral evil, should be disposed to imitate bad examples, rather than good ones — to neglect their duty, rather than perform it; and that all discreet parents and instructors, who have any familiar acquaintance with the youthful mind, should be led to frame their whole system of instruction and discipline upon the principle, that children are *prone to evil.* Any plan of education, whether domestic or public, which should

* Sermon at the Ordination of Rev. J. Codman, D. D.

overlook this principle, and involve the opposite one of man's *native purity*, would be regarded by all men of sober experience and sober judgment, as romantic and dangerous.

But I must bring my remarks on this subject to a close. My object was to show that we receive the doctrine of man's native corruption upon its own proper evidence, as we receive any other truth; and that it is totally unphilosphical and unscriptural to suffer this evidence to be obscured or perplexed by the inquiry, how the doctrine can be reconciled with the moral perfection of God. Both the moral perfection of God, and the doctrine of human depravity, rest upon evidence which is perfectly conclusive. We believe them both, and believe them to be entirely consistent with each other. Indeed we see no peculiar difficulty attending their consistency. If any one asserts, that our doctrine of man's depravity and the moral perfection of God are inconsistent with each other, it will behoove him to show in what respects they are inconsistent. He ought to show, too, how it is any more inconsistent with the goodness of God for men to be corrupt in the earliest period of their existence, than in any subsequent period; or for all men to be corrupt, than for any part of them; or for men to be corrupt in a higher degree, than in a lower degree. If, from a consideration of the divine goodness, or for other reasons, any should persist in denying the doctrine of man's *native depravity*, they will easily see what a task they take upon themselves. They must first make it appear, by a thorough investigation, conducted in conformity to just and allowed principles, that no texts of Scripture contain the doctrine. In addition to this, they must satisfactorily account for all the corruption and wickedness which man has exhibited, from childhood to old age, in all nations and circumstances, and in opposition to all the means which have been used to restrain him, without admitting that his *nature is prone to evil;* — a task of the same kind, with that of accounting for all the phenomena of the natural world which prove the law of gravitation, without admitting that law.

LETTER VII.

Respected Friends,

Unitarian writers generally, as well as the author of the sermon before us, have appeared to think, that the commonly received doctrine of *Election* is totally incompatible with the goodness of God, and that our believing that doctrine proves that we do not believe in the divine goodness.

To this subject I hope you will attend with that candor and fairness, without which, as you must have often seen in others, all inquiry after the truth is in vain. Against the doctrine of the Reformed churches now to be considered, there are strong prepossessions. And I am free to acknowledge, that orthodox writers and preachers of high repute, but deficient in judgment, have, in some instances, exhibited the doctrine in a manner which has given too much occasion for these prepossessions; — and too much occasion for this author and many others to think, that the doctrine is inconsistent with the moral perfection of God. I wish you, therefore, distinctly to understand, that it is not the doctrine of Election as stated by some of its injudicious advocates, or as understood by its opposers, that I now undertake to defend.

The doctrine of Election, besides being very important, involves questions of difficult and profound investigation. It respects the administration of a Being possessed of infinite understanding and infinite holiness, — a Being to whom we have no right to dictate, and of whom we have no cause to complain, — a Being before whose supreme majesty we are nothing and less than nothing. Though I have a heart as lofty, and vain, and presumptuous as others; yet when I bring this subject before me, and consider that I have undertaken to inquire respecting the counsels of the eternal, incomprehensible God, my Sovereign and my Judge, I stand in awe; I check my presumption; and resolve to hold my mind in a humble, docile frame, lest I should incur that appalling

rebuke of the Apostle: "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?" I bid myself remember, that neither my opinions nor those of my fellow-men are entitled to regard, any further than they agree with the truths of revelation; and that, whatever my opinions or wishes may be, those truths will remain the same. I would devoutly cherish the impression, that no opinions can be right, which would make any part of Scripture unwelcome to me; and that the greatest dislike of men, which may be incurred by defending the doctrines of revelation, is as nothing, compared with the frown of my final Judge for rejecting those doctrines.

It is generally acknowledged by Christians, that no opinion or reasoning, respecting the divine character or administration, can be relied upon, except that which rests on the declarations of Scripture. On this subject especially, not the least respect is due to any argument, however plausible, which, on careful inquiry, is found contrary to what God has taught us in his word, or to what takes place in his providence. The object of our present inquiry is, then, very simple. If it were put to my natural reason to judge, by its own light, respecting what is called the doctrine of Election; my judgment would probably agree with the judgment of those who reject the doctrine. If the question were, what difficulties attend the doctrine; I could bring forward as many as others. And if the question were, whether the doctrine, as generally represented by its opposers, and even by the author of this sermon, is according to the word of God; I should answer, as they do, in the negative. But the proper question is, *what saith the Scripture?* What does God himself teach us, as to the manner in which he designates those who are to be heirs of salvation?

I shall not go largely into a consideration of the evidence from Scripture, in support of the doctrine under consideration; but shall merely proceed far enough to show, that we do not believe the doctrine without evidence, and that our believing it is no proof of our denying the moral perfection of God, but a consequence of our reverence for his word.

I find that Jesus Christ often speaks of a part of mankind as given him of the Father. This he does several times in John xvii. As an example of the whole, v. 2 may be taken: "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." The sense is, *that the Father has given to Christ a part of the human race, and that those who have been thus given to him are the persons who shall have eternal life.* As to the meaning of the passage, the only question that deserves a moment's consideration is, whether it relates to all who shall be finally saved, or merely to those who were disciples of Christ at that time. In favor of the larger sense there are several arguments.

1. Christ is here speaking of his general commission and work, as a Saviour. He tells us, that the Father has given him power over *all flesh*, without the least intimation of any limits. And for what purpose was he endued with this extensive power? "That he might give eternal life to *as many as the Father had given him.*" His power as a Saviour did in fact extend, not merely to those who were then his disciples, but to the whole number of the redeemed. But why should he speak of his *power* in this extensive sense, if he meant that the end to be accomplished by it should be understood in so limited a sense? No limits are suggested. Why, then, should we not understand the phrase, "as many as thou hast given him," to denote all to whom Christ will actually give eternal life?

2. The context shows that Christ, in the prayer here recited, had his eye upon all who should be saved in future ages. V. 20: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word." There can be no reason to doubt, that he had as large an extent of views in the second verse as in the twentieth.

3. This interpretation receives additional confirmation from a similar passage in John 6: 37, 39, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. — And this is the Father's will, who sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should

raise it up again at the last day." Those who *are given* to Christ, and those who *shall come* to Christ, are here identified. The passage plainly signifies, that a person's being given to Christ *secures* his coming to Christ. And this circumstance settles one point, namely, that those who will finally be saved are given to Christ *before* they come to him. From v. 39, we have additional proof, that when Christ speaks of those who were given him of the Father, he includes the whole number that shall be saved. "This is the Father's will, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day." The work of the Saviour doubtless extends to all, who shall be raised to eternal life at the last day. But this work of his is here represented as relating to those whom the Father had given him. From the whole it seems evident, that when Christ speaks so familiarly, in John xvii, of those who were given him, he refers to all who shall be saved.

But even on supposition that the language related to those only who were then his disciples, the argument would still be the same, because the principle would be the same. There could be no reason, why the Father should give Christ those who were saved by him during his life, and not those who should be saved afterwards; and no reason why being given to Christ should stand in certain connection with salvation in one case, and not in the other.

If we should examine other texts of similar import, we should find still more abundant proof of what is so evident from the two passages above cited; namely, *that the Father has given a portion of mankind to Christ in a peculiar sense, and in distinction from others, and that Christ will actually bestow eternal life on all who have been thus given him.* I see not how any man can give a different sense to the texts alluded to, without being conscious that he is influenced by prejudice.

Pursuing the single inquiry, *what the Scriptures teach,*—we find several passages which speak, with a remarkable emphasis, of *a purpose and choice of God* respecting those who will be saved. I shall consider only two.

The Apostle says to the Ephesians, ch. 1: 3—11, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ; *according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, etc.; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace,* — in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, *being predestinated according to the purpose of him, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.*" Here we are taught, that God has a *purpose, choice, will,* or *good pleasure,* respecting those who are saved. It is such a *purpose,* that when men are saved, they are saved *according to it.* It is a *purpose,* or *choice,* which was in the mind of God *before* they were saved, and *before* they *existed.* They were "chosen in Christ, before the foundation of the world." And it is a *purpose,* which does not rest upon any personal merit, in those who are its objects. The *purpose,* or *choice,* is here repeatedly represented as a matter of *grace,* as *according to the riches of grace;* — exactly in agreement with other passages, which exclude *all works of righteousness* from having any concern in this matter.

The other passage I shall particularly notice is Rom. 9: 11—24. In verses 11, 12, 13, it is said: "For the children," that is, Jacob and Esau, "being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth, it was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." It is beyond all doubt in my mind, that this interesting passage was meant to be understood in a *national* sense; that is, that they respected Jacob and Esau, not personally, but as the heads of two tribes or nations; in other words, that they respected those two nations. It is apparent, too, that what is quoted from Moses, v. 15, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," was said originally respecting a part of the Israelitish nation in the wilderness. But

it is equally clear, that the Apostle makes use of the divine conduct respecting the posterity of Jacob and Esau, mentioned in v. 11, 12, 13, and the declaration of God, quoted in v. 15, as illustrative of a general principle in the divine administration. This principle is brought into view, v. 16, as an inference from what preceded. "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." It is deduced, as a general principle, from what God said respecting the offending Israelites in a particular case. This mode of reasoning is repeated immediately after. First, a passage is quoted from the Old Testament: v. 17, "For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, even for this same cause have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." From this declaration of God respecting a single individual, a general conclusion is again drawn, v. 18, "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." This is laid down by the Apostle as a general principle of the divine administration. And it is this general principle that is asserted in the doctrine of Election, or sovereign grace.

Now take a brief view of this remarkable passage. What is it that the Apostle takes so much pains to establish? Evidently this, that God makes distinctions among men, or bestows peculiar favors on some and not on others, *according to his own will or pleasure.* How does he prove this? From *particular instances* of the divine conduct. It is for this purpose he quotes what God said respecting his treatment of Jacob and Esau, and of Pharaoh. Taken in any other view, the quotations have no relation to the subject, and the reasoning of the Apostle from them is nugatory.

But how can the Apostle infer a general truth from particular facts? How can he infer what the divine purpose and conduct will generally be, respecting the higher distinctions to be made among men in the concerns of religion, from what they were towards a few individuals in regard to other distinctions? Plainly because the same principle is involved in both. The truth

asserted in v. 16 is *general.* "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." The sense is, that in relation to the subject under consideration, nothing is effected by the efforts of man, but that everything depends on the mercy of God. This general truth is inferred from what God said respecting his conduct in a particular case, because that case implied the same principle. What objection can lie against this argument? If God proceeded in the manner described in his treatment of two nations, that is, made a distinction between them by his own sovereign purpose and act; he may surely proceed in the same manner towards individuals. And if he has actually proceeded in this manner and on this principle, in his treatment of particular individuals, he may proceed in the same manner in his treatment of others. That the Apostle reasons thus is undeniable.

It may be made still more certain that we understand this passage correctly, by looking at the objection which the Apostle supposed would be made. "Thou wilt say then unto me, why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?" v. 19. The nature of the objection proves, that it related to that very doctrine of God's sovereign purpose and agency, which makes a part of our faith. It is the very objection which is still made against that doctrine. The nature of the objection shows the nature of the doctrine against which it was urged. And the nature of the answer, v. 20—24, shows, still more plainly, what was the nature of the objection, and the nature of the doctrine objected to. It is exactly the answer, which it is suitable to give to one who urges just such an objection as this, against the doctrine of God's sovereign purpose and agency. Such a striking correspondence must be considered as affording very satisfactory evidence of the scope and meaning of the discourse.

There is one more important inquiry respecting this passage; and that is, whether that general principle of the divine administration which the Apostle establishes, relates to the eternal interests of men, or to something of less moment. Now I think nothing can be plainer than the correctness of the common con-

struction of the passage, viz., that it relates to the difference which exists among men with regard to their spiritual and eternal state. This appears from the commencement of this particular part of the discourse, v. 6, 7, 8, in which the Apostle brings into view the essential difference between *real Israelites* and those who are *of Israel*, that is, descended from him; — between the children of the flesh and the children of God. The Apostle labors throughout the discourse, to illustrate the manner in which this difference is made, drawing his illustrations, as was natural when reasoning with Jews, from the Jewish Scriptures. That he refers to the difference which is made among men in relation to their religious character and salvation, is evident also from v. 22, 23, etc., where, in pursuance of the same subject which was treated v. 6—18, he speaks of the vessels of mercy, prepared for glory, in contradistinction to the vessels of wrath; of those who were called, both Jews and Gentiles; of God's people, etc.

If still further confirmation of the correctness of the reasoning above exhibited were necessary, it could, I think, be made to appear, that the doctrine of God's sovereign Election is the only doctrine which accounts satisfactorily for the actual difference which exists between true believers and the rest of the world.

But if, after all, any should be disposed to urge the common objections against this doctrine, that it makes God unrighteous, and that, if it is true, we cannot be blamed for our sins; I would for the present leave them to learn from this chapter how the Apostle Paul would answer their objections.

The doctrine we are now considering is, in my apprehension, clearly implied in the general doctrine of the divine purpose. That God has a wise and holy plan, and that all events take place in conformity to it, is not only taught expressly and abundantly in the Scriptures, but results from the absolute perfection of God and from the necessary dependence of all created things on him, as clearly as any mathematical truth results from its premises. But if God has a general plan or design respecting the events which take place, he must surely have one respecting so important an event as the salvation of his people.

But I shall proceed no further with the proof. This subject has been argued by the ablest writers that have appeared since the Christian era. The controversy has been wrought up to such a degree of warmth, and the doctrine is associated in the minds of not a few with so many strange and absurd notions, that it has become a matter of difficulty and hazard for a man to offer any proof in its favor, or even to profess that he believes it. Indeed, a man in some instances, can hardly find himself at liberty simply to repeat the texts of Scripture which support the doctrine, without being attacked with a score of common place reflections, intended to put down the doctrine at once. I trust my readers will be sensible, that the state of mind which is exhibited in such cases is altogether at variance with Christian candor, and in a high degree unpropitious to the cause of truth.

LETTER VIII.

Respected Friends,

Though I have detained you longer than I intended, on the doctrine of Election, I must beg your indulgence, while I express my thoughts without reserve, on various incorrect views and representations of the doctrine, and on some of the difficulties attending it.

Orthodox writers have not unfrequently made use of expressions which, at first view, may seem to furnish occasion for some of the heavy charges brought against us by our opposers. But let it be remembered, that for the rash, unqualified expressions of men who have become hot and violent by controversy, we are not to be held responsible. We here enter our solemn protest against the language which has sometimes been employed, and the conceptions which have sometimes been entertained on this subject, or rather

perhaps against the appendages which have been attached to it by men who have been denominated Calvinists. Though we embrace the doctrine as one which is taught in Scripture, and which corresponds with enlightened reason and Christian piety; we do not embrace it in the form, and with the appendages, to which I allude. But my present concern is chiefly with the representations of our opposers.

First. It is often represented, that we believe in an *arbitrary, unconditional, absolute decree of election.* These words are used abundantly by opposers of the doctrine, and are made the means of exciting many prejudices against it. This representation of the doctrine must receive particular attention.

The word *arbitrary* has acquired a bad sense; and is now understood to express the character of a tyrannical master or ruler, who acts without regard to reason or justice, and is governed by his own capricious will. God's purpose respecting the salvation of men is, in our view, at the greatest distance from anything like this. We consider the purpose of God to be as just and reasonable, as his administration. If, in the actual *salvation* of the penitent and holy, God is wise and good; he is equally wise and good in his *purpose* to save them,—his conduct being an exact accomplishment of his purpose. No objection, therefore, can lie against the previous purpose of his will, which does not lie equally against the acts of his government. The inquiry then respects a matter of fact. Does God *act* wisely and benevolently in saving sinners? Or does he act from a capricious, tyrannical will? If the actions of his government are capricious and tyrannical, so is his purpose. If his actions are wise and good, his purpose is so likewise. Now although in various respects God's proceedings in saving sinners are inscrutable to us, and we are unable to see by what reasons he is influenced; we believe he has reasons, which are perfectly satisfactory to himself, and which, were they made known, would be satisfactory to all good beings. It is utterly impossible, that a Being of infinite perfection should act under the influence of a capricious or despotic will.

I say then, we do not hold the doctrine of Election in any such

sense, as implies, that the purpose of God is *despotic* or *capricious*. It is indeed often represented in Scripture to be the purpose of his *will*, and to be according to his *good pleasure*. But what can be more wise and reasonable, than the *will* or *good pleasure of* God? When the inspired writers declare the purpose of God to be according to *his own will*, they do, it is granted, signify to us, that it varies from the will of *man;* but they do this, to show its superior wisdom and goodness. If it were according to the will of *man*, it would be marked only with *human* wisdom. But as it is according to the will of *God*, it is marked with *divine* wisdom.

We inquire next, whether the purpose of God respecting the salvation of men is *unconditional and absolute*. I know that, in consequence of particular errors which have prevailed, it has been so represented by many of its advocates. But the language is certainly liable to be misunderstood, and ought not to be used without care. Why should we employ words, which will not convey, truly and exactly, to the minds of others, the views which we ourselves entertain? Here, as before, I look at the divine conduct in saving sinners, considering that to be exactly correspondent with the previous divine purpose. And my inquiry is,—does God actually save sinners *unconditionally?* The first answer I give to this is, that God would never have saved them, had not Christ interposed and made an atonement. This then is a *condition* of human salvation; it is the great event, on account of which God forgives. But I inquire further; does God actually save sinners, that is, forgive them and receive them into his kingdom, without any condition *on their part?* The Bible furnishes the answer. "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." "He that believeth shall be saved." This is the uniform representation of the Bible. The condition of eternal life *to be performed by men*, is repentance, faith, obedience. They can no more be saved without these, than without the death of Christ. These conditions, it is true, are of a different nature from the atonement; but they are as really necessary. This then is my conclusion. If God does not actually save sinners without

conditions; he did not *purpose* to save them without conditions,—his purpose and conduct always agreeing exactly with each other. In his eternal purpose, he regarded *the same conditions*, and regarded them *in the same manner*, as he does now when he saves. Clearly then, the purpose of God to save men cannot, in this respect, be considered as *unconditional*. And as the word is apt to be understood as excluding all regard to these conditions, and being so understood, involves a palpable and dangerous error; the use of it ought, I think, to be avoided; except when the particular error to be confuted, or some other circumstances, will show plainly, that it is used in a sense agreeable to the truth.

But the principal object of orthodox writers in using the word *unconditional* in this case, has been the denial of a particular error. Some men have asserted, that the divine purpose respecting the salvation of sinners, which is so often spoken of in Scripture, is grounded altogether on the foreknowledge of the good works of those who are destined to salvation, and have, in this view, called the purpose of God *conditional*. Orthodox writers have denied *such a conditionality* as this, and have justified themselves by appealing to such texts, as the following; 2 Tim. 1: 9, "God hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ before the world began." Tit. 3: 5, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us." God's saving us according to his purpose and grace is here contradistinguished to his saving us according to our works; and the defenders of orthodoxy have justly considered all such representations of Scripture as opposed to the opinion, that the divine purpose is conditional in the sense above mentioned.

To remove all appearances of inconsistency between the two different views above taken, of the meaning and propriety of the word *unconditional* in relation to this subject, it is only necessary to make two obvious remarks. 1. Those things, which are spoken of as conditions on the part of man, are not so in the sense of

merit, and therefore take nothing from the freeness or riches of divine grace. 2. That which is referred to in the passages above cited, where all conditionality is excluded, is evidently the act of God in the first renewal of the sinner, or in first saving him from sin. "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works," etc. It was the *commencement* of the work of God in salvation. So in the parallel text, in Titus. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." The salvation here spoken of as excluding all consideration of works, was the act of God in *regeneration,—the renewing of the Holy Ghost.* This point is made still clearer by Eph. 2: 4—10. Accordingly, we hold it as a universal fact, that impenitent, unrenewed sinners do no good work, which God regards as a condition of their being renewed, or on account of which he has promised them regeneration;—that, in all cases, he calls and renews them, according to his own purpose and grace. Now if his merciful act in their renewal to holiness is *in this sense unconditional;* so is his previous purpose. The one is as certain and unexceptionable, as the other.

Such are my views, and, if I mistake not, of my brethren generally, respecting this part of the subject. But whenever we speak of the forgiveness of sin, the comforts of religion, or any other blessings which God has promised to bestow, as tokens of his favor to his children, whether here or hereafter; we are led by the tenor of Scripture, to understand them as promised, not only on the ground of the perfect atonement made by the Saviour of sinners, but also on conditions to be performed by them.

After the foregoing explanations, I hope the doctrine we hold respecting the purpose of God in the election of his people, or his agency in their salvation, will no longer be represented as implying, that God in this respect bears any resemblance to a capricious, arbitrary, or despotic ruler. Although some orthodox writers may have inadvertently used language, which might lead to such a view of the character of God; yet that view is totally

repugnant to our feelings, and to everything which our doctrine is intended to contain. God does, indeed, plainly possess the *uncontrollable power* of an absolute monarch; but his uncontrollable power is always directed by infinite wisdom and goodness. He does, indeed, act according to *his own will;* but his will, be it remembered, is the will of a wise and benevolent ruler, a friend to his subjects; and his acting in all things according to his own will, instead of being a cause of dissatisfaction and alarm, is the greatest possible security to the interests of the universe. God may also frequently act without any apparent reasons. But in reality there is no part of his administration, for which the highest and best reasons do not exist in his own infallible mind.

The danger of representing the character and administration of God by the language, which is commonly applied to the character and administration of an absolute earthly sovereign, is, that the similitude which is intended, and which really exists, will be carried too far; that instead of being restricted to those points in which a similitude would be honorable to God, it will be understood as reaching those, in which a similitude would be a stain upon his perfect character. The words despot, monarch, absolute, and arbitrary were not originally and necessarily expressive of any bad qualities. *Despot* signifies a master, a prince who rules with unlimited power; *monarch*, one who exercises power or authority alone; *absolute*, complete, unlimited; *arbitrary*, according to one's own will. They all admit of a good sense; and, in truth, they would never be understood in a bad sense, had they not become associated in our minds with the bad qualities of those earthly masters or rulers, to whom they have been applied. But in consequence of this association, we cannot safely apply them to God without special care to limit the points of analogy which are intended. And in most cases of the kind, even this precaution would not preclude all exposure to error; because the words, having acquired a bad sense, cannot be applied to any one, without danger of conveying more or less of that bad sense to our minds. I should therefore think it unadvised, in any common

case, to make use of such terms as those above mentioned, in describing the character or administration of God.

It is said by our opposers, that the doctrine we maintain on this subject makes God *unjust*.

As to this charge of injustice, which is always meant to relate to those who are not chosen to salvation, the views which we entertain are briefly these. The Scriptures teach, that all men are sinners, and children of wrath; that if God should be strict to mark iniquity, no man could stand before him; that salvation is always of grace. Now suppose salvation is not granted to all. Suppose it not granted to any. Is God *unjust?* unjust in not vouchsafing to men that, to which they have no claim? unjust in inflicting the evil which they deserve? The divine *law* then is unjust. For how can the law be just in threatening an evil, which may not be justly inflicted? Further. If we should say, God cannot justly withhold the blessings of salvation in the instances here intended; this would be the same as saying, that justice requires God to save all. But the Scriptures represent it not only as an unmerited favor that God saves any, but as a matter of fact that he will not save all. Is God then chargeable with actual injustice? But if God is just in annexing such a penalty to his law, and just in executing it; it must be obvious that he is equally just in his *determination* to do so. For no principle can be more plain and certain, than that it is just for the omniscient God to determine beforehand to do that, which it is just for him actually to do. No imputation of injustice, therefore, can lie against the previous purpose of God respecting those who are not saved, which does not lie equally against his law and his administration.

Here we find one of the principal sources of difficulty respecting this subject. It is not well considered, that the divine purpose is grounded on the same reasons, and conformed to the same views, with the divine conduct. When God punishes transgressors, he does it for sufficient reasons. When he previously determines to punish them, it is for the same reasons. When the Judge shall say to the wicked, "depart from me, ye that work iniquity;"

the reason of the sentence is obvious, namely, that they had worked iniquity. With a perfect foreknowledge of that fact, and altogether on that account, he determines beforehand to pronounce that sentence. Thus the purpose of God perfectly corresponds with the acts of his government. Accordingly, his purpose to punish is no more absolute and unconditional, than his act in punishing. And the act of God in punishing those who transgress his law, is no more absolute and unconditional, than the act of a magistrate in punishing transgressors of civil law. A good ruler punishes only for offences against the law; punishes only according to law; or, which is the same thing, according to the ill desert of offenders. And no good ruler can ever design or decree punishment on any other principles. I object as strongly as any opposer of the doctrine of the divine purpose, against representing God as intending or appointing the destruction of sinners absolutely and unconditionally, without regard to justice or goodness, and from a delight in seeing their misery. Such a representation is infinitely distant from the truth. And whatever unguarded expressions orthodox writers may have sometimes used; I am persuaded they have really meant nothing contrary to the sentiments which I have exhibited.

From the free remarks I have made, you will see what my views and those of my orthodox brethren are, respecting what is called the divine purpose or decree of *reprobation*. It is, as we understand the subject, the determination of God, the righteous Governor of the world, to punish disobedient subjects *for their sins*, and according to their deserts. In one respect, therefore, there is an obvious difference between the purpose of God to *save*, and his purpose to *destroy;* a difference exactly agreeing with that which exists between the act of God in saving, and his act in destroying. He saves men as an act of grace, not out of respect to anything in them which renders them *deserving* of salvation. But he punishes the wicked purely on account of their sins, which render them *deserving* of punishment. He executes upon them simply an act of justice. In a word; they, who are saved, receive a good which they do not deserve; but they who are destroyed, receive just that

evil which they do deserve. Accordingly, the *purpose* of God in the former case, is a purpose to bestow upon men blessings not deserved; but in the latter case, it is a purpose to inflict upon men the very evil which they deserve.

It has often been alleged, as an objection against the doctrine of Election, that it makes God *a respecter of persons;* or represents him as influenced by *partiality.*

In order to determine, whether this objection is well founded, we must inquire what *respect of persons is.* The word, I think, has the same sense in Scripture, and in common discourse. Let us then see what its signification is. — Lev. 19: 15, "Thou shalt do no unrighteousness in judgment; thou shalt not *respect the person* of the poor, nor know the *person* of the mighty; but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbor;" that is, thou shalt not be influenced in judgment by any consideration of the poverty or riches, the weakness or power of those, who are to be judged, but by a single regard to justice and truth. In 2 Chron. 19: 5—7, Jehoshaphat inculcated strict justice and fidelity upon Judges from the consideration, that with God, whose servants they were, there was no iniquity, *nor respect of persons*, nor taking of gifts; that is, he was never biassed in judgment by any corrupt passions, personal attachments, or bribes, but acted purely out of regard to justice. See also Deut. 10: 17, 18, where the people were cautioned against supposing that God would feel any partial respect to the persons of men, or that he would not exercise a just and equal regard to the fatherless, the widow, and the stranger. Acts 10: 34. Peter learnt from his vision at Joppa and from subsequent events, that God was not a *respecter of persons;* that, in dispensing his blessings, he had not that partial and exclusive regard to the Jews, which had been attributed to him, but that, in every nation, he that feared God and worked righteousness was accepted. It referred to the special favor shown to Cornelius, a sincere worshipper of God among the Gentiles. So Rom. 2: 11, the same declaration is made, to show that, in his final judgment, God would treat all men on the same principle of impartial justice, without the least regard to national

distinction. See also James 3: 1—4, where *respect of persons* is explained to be a partial regard to the rich and splendid, and contempt of the poor.

Now if *respect of persons* is really what I have represented it to be, the doctrine of Election which we hold, is far from implying that God is chargeable with it in any degree. It implies the contrary. For the doctrine asserts, that he is not influenced to make choice of those who are to be saved, by any respect to their persons more than to the persons of others, nor by a regard to anything in them or in their circumstances, which renders them more pleasing to him, or more worthy of his favor, than others. Those who are chosen of God to salvation, are not chosen because they were in themselves more worthy of this blessing than others. He chose them for reasons which he has not revealed. He did it, as it is expressed by the inspired writers, "according to the counsel of his own will," — "according to his good pleasure," — or "because it seemed good in his sight." These phrases plainly denote that the purpose and administration of God are, in this respect, different from what our wisdom would dictate, or our affection choose; that they cannot be accounted for by any principles known to us, but result from the infinite perfection of God, and are conformed to reasons which he has concealed in his own mind. These are our views. Accordingly, when, from the deep veneration we feel for the unsearchable wisdom of God, and an honest regard to what we conceive to be the obvious sense of various passages in his word, we assert the doctrine of Election; we are at the greatest possible distance from ascribing to him anything like partiality, or respect of persons. We believe he acts, and determines to act, altogether from different and higher reasons. And we are satisfied that those reasons are perfectly wise and benevolent, not because we distinctly know what they are, but because we believe in the moral perfection of God, and in cases the most profoundly mysterious, are sure that his designs and actions are right.

Will any one still assert, that, if God chooses men to salvation, as the doctrine of Election implies, it must necessarily be from

partiality, or respect of persons? Then it behooves him to prove, that God cannot choose them from any other motive; that it is impossible there should be any other reason for making the difference. Unless this is made to appear, we shall still believe that God does thus choose men to salvation, and at the same time believe that he is no respecter of persons, but that in this case, as in all others, he is influenced by reasons, which are perfectly consentaneous to his own eternal wisdom and benevolence, and which, if known to us, would appear in the highest degree honorable to his character.

Another objection, often urged against the doctrine of Election, is, that it *destroys free agency* and *makes men mere machines.*

I reply; that so far as our convictions are concerned, this objection is groundless; because we entertain no views of the doctrine, which seem to us at all inconsistent with the most perfect free agency.

But it may be said that, whether we are aware of it or not, the opinion which we entertain respecting the divine purpose, is *really* inconsistent with free moral agency.

In reply to this, I have time only to state in few words, the reflections which have been most satisfactory to my own mind.

The purpose of God determining the salvation of his people needs not to be supposed inconsistent with their moral agency, unless the purpose of God respecting the conduct or condition of men is so in every case. I make it then a *general inquiry.* Is it in all cases, repugnant to the notion of the free moral agency of men, that God should have a previous purpose or design respecting their actions? If any man asserts this broad principle, I ask for his reasons. Are the acts of the understanding, the affection, or the will of man deprived of their own proper nature, because they are conformed to a divine purpose? Is any one thing, great or small, which goes to constitute moral agency, taken away or in any degree altered by the fact, that it exists according to God's eternal plan? It would seem to me reasonable to suppose, that God's purpose, or will, if it has any influence, must make things what they are, instead of depriving them

of their proper nature. I first look at things, both in the natural and moral world, as they exist. I try to discover what they are. Then, as they are of necessity dependent on God, I conclude they must exist according to his purpose. I find myself a moral being; that is, I am conscious of those powers and actions, which give me the clearest notion of a moral agent, and which, to my perfect satisfaction, render me accountable to a moral law and government. I then conclude, as I am a creature of God, that I exist as I am, that is, as a moral agent, according to his purpose. And if God's purpose, determining my existence as a moral agent, is consistent with my actually existing as such; why may not his purpose, determining the exercises of my moral agency, be consistent with the existence of such moral exercises? The following positions, which I think conformable to sound reason and philosophy, express my views in brief. God first determines, *that man shall be a moral agent*, and that in all the circumstances of his existence, he shall *possess and exercise all his moral powers.* And then God determines that, *in the perfect exercise of all his moral powers*, he shall act in a certain manner, and form a certain character. The determination of God, thus understood, instead of being *inconsistent* with free moral agency, does in fact *secure* it. It aims and tends to produce the *uninterrupted exercise of all our moral powers.*

But I drop all reasoning of this sort, and appeal to facts. There are numerous instances mentioned in Scripture, in which God is expressly declared to have *predetermined* the actions of men; and yet they had as much moral freedom, and felt themselves as worthy of praise or blame in those actions, as in any other. The examples of this, which everywhere occur in the sacred volume, prove incontrovertibly, that the purpose of God is consistent with moral agency. For in those cases in which we certainly know that a divine purpose has existed, there has been as much evidence of moral agency as in any case whatever, and as much as we can conceive possible. Not the least thing which can belong to the powers of a moral agent, or to the manner of exercising them, has been taken away or obstructed by the divine purpose.

Nay, I should rather say, that those very powers of a moral agent and the appropriate manner of exercising them, have been the true result of that purpose.

Now admitting in the cases referred to, even if they were much fewer than they are, that the purpose of God has consisted with the unimpaired moral agency of man; I find no difficulty in admitting, that it may consist with it in any other case. And if so, the objection we have been considering, that the doctrine of Election destroys moral agency and makes men mere machines, loses all its force.

I shall notice one more objection against the doctrine of Election, namely, *that it is inconsistent with the sincerity of God in the declarations of his word.*

The answer to this objection which appears to me the most satisfactory, consists in assigning to the doctrine its proper form and relations. When I undertake to explain the purpose of God respecting those who are to be saved, I consider it essential to say, that it is to be so understood as not to contradict his truth and sincerity in any of the declarations of his word. If in connection with God's purpose respecting the salvation of his people, the Bible teaches, that he commands men universally to repent, and invites them to accept eternal life, and that he is perfectly ready to grant them the blessings of salvation on the most reasonable and gracious terms; our faith must receive the doctrine as having this form, and standing in this relation. It is thus the doctrine is actually received by orthodox ministers generally. While they believe the doctrine of Election, they do undoubtingly believe and expressly teach the perfect sincerity of God in all his addresses to men, whether chosen to salvation or not; and they present the invitations of God's word to sinners, without any reference to that distinction, and with as much earnestness, and as much belief of the divine sincerity, as if they had no conception of any divine purpose. My belief is, that all this is perfectly just; and that if we had a thorough acquaintance with the subject, we should see that the purpose of God and his corresponding agency are of such a character, that they occasion no

difficulty at all respecting his sincerity. These two points of divine truth are entirely distinct. They relate to the character of God and to the state of man in different ways. And when they are proved, each one by its own proper evidence, we receive them both, exactly as we receive different truths, made known to us in different ways in any of the sciences. As to the fact of their *consistency*, it is sufficient to satisfy us, to find that they are both supported by conclusive evidence, and that neither of them palpably contradicts the other. If any man asserts that there is an inconsistency between these two doctrines, he must prove it. And in proving it he must remember, that it will be difficult to satisfy thinking men, unless he can make it appear, that the evidence which supports one or the other of them is defective, or that the main proposition contained in one of them is, in the same sense in which it is there affirmed, contradicted or denied in the other.

In closing my remarks on this part of the subject, I am willing to concede, that *those views* of the doctrine of Election, against which Whitby and many other respectable writers direct their principal arguments, are justly liable to objection. And if we should copy the example of some of its advocates, and call the purpose of God *an absolute*, *irresistible*, *unconditional*, *unfrustrable decree*, using these epithets abundantly, and without qualification, and in such a manner as would imply that the divine purpose is unreasonable or oppressive, or the divine agency in executing it compulsory; we should really give the doctrine such a character, that it could never be received by men of rational and candid minds. This is the apology which I have been accustomed to make for some Christians, who exhibit marks of sincere piety to God and heartfelt reverence for his word, who yet hesitate to admit the doctrine of Election. What they disbelieve is not the simple doctrine, as we understand it, but something which has been artfully or injudiciously appended to it. Cases of this kind have led me to reflect on the importance of special caution, as to the manner of explaining and defending this profound and holy doctrine.

I have now done what I thought necessary to explain the proper form and relations of this doctrine, and to guard it against misapprehension. I make these explanations a part of the statement of the doctrine. And it must, I think, occur to my readers, that, when I use such care to shape and limit the doctrine, and to guard it against misapprehension, I do but imitate what the Apostle Paul did in other cases. His opposers were inclined to put a wrong construction upon his doctrines, and to make wrong inferences from them. "If our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous, who taketh vengeance? God forbid." Again, he taught, in respect of penitent sinners, that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." He then reasons with objectors. "What shall we say then? Shall we sin, that grace may abound? God forbid." We make use of the same caution on the present subject. The Scriptures teach that God has given to Christ a portion of the human race; that all who have been thus given to him, shall come to him and be saved; and that they are saved according to God's eternal purpose. This is what we mean by the doctrine of Election. But is this purpose of God *absolute* and *arbitrary*, in the sense in which these terms are commonly used? God forbid. Is this purpose of God, in all respects, *unconditional?* By no means. For without the shedding of blood there can be no remission; nor can any be received into Christ's kingdom without repentance and faith. But if God determines to save only a part of mankind, is he not *unjust?* God forbid. There is certainly no injustice to those who are saved; nor can there be any to those who are not saved, if their sufferings are only what they deserve. But is not the purpose of God in this respect chargeable with partiality, or respect of persons? God forbid. He makes the difference on principles or for reasons perfectly agreeable to infinite wisdom and goodness. But does not God's purpose to save his people, or his agency in executing that purpose, destroy their free agency and make them machines? By no means. They are as free in this case as in any other; as free as they could be, were there no divine purpose. Finally; is not this immutable purpose

of God inconsistent with the truth and sincerity of his proposals of mercy to sinners? We say here also, God forbid. His purpose no more interferes with his sincerity, than it does with any other divine attribute, or with any other truth. In his offer of salvation he treats men as moral agents; and he always has bestowed salvation upon those who have accepted his offer in the manner proposed; and he would have bestowed it upon those who perish, if they had in the same manner complied with the conditions. Who then can impeach his sincerity?

You now see what we mean by the doctrine of Election. As the result of his own unsearchable wisdom and grace, and for reasons which relate to the great ends of his administration, God eternally purposed to save a great number of our race, and purposed to save them precisely in the manner in which he does actually save them. Now every man who duly weighs the subject must perceive, that according to this statement, the notion of a *previous* divine purpose is attended with no peculiar difficulty. If the divine purpose exactly corresponds with the divine conduct, our whole inquiry may properly relate to that conduct. For if the divine conduct in saving men is unobjectionable; the divine purpose, of which that conduct is the accomplishment, must be equally unobjectionable. Whatever it is proper for God to do, it is proper for him to determine to do. And whether that determination precedes the action by a longer or shorter space, its character is the same.

After coming to this article of divine truth, concerning which so many mistakes have been entertained, and against which so many objections have been arrayed, I felt a desire to disclose to you my inmost thoughts upon the subject; being fully persuaded, that the doctrine, properly stated, is honorable to God; that it is abundantly confirmed by the Scriptures, and has strong claims upon our faith. Indeed we should find it difficult to see, how any objection could ever be urged against it, were it not for the natural repugnance which exists in the heart of man against the doctrines of divine truth, and which, to our great discomfort, and with a full conviction of its unreasonableness and criminality, we

have felt in ourselves. Were it not for this repugnance, which plainly shows the moral disorder of the human mind, no man, we think, could be found, who would not regard the doctrine with the most cordial acquiescence. For the precious blessings of salvation must be ultimately in the hands of God, or in the hands of man. The extent to which they shall be received, must be determined by God, or by man. The Scriptures teach, and facts teach, that God has reserved this great concern in his own hands; that he "saves men according to his own purpose and grace;" or, which is the same thing, that "he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy." I make the appeal to your impartial judgment, whether this momentous concern could be in better hands; whether we have not reason for unbounded confidence in the purpose and administration of a Being, who is infinitely wise and good; and whether any sentiment respecting this whole subject can be more reasonable in itself, or more suitable for us, than that which was uttered with so much joy by the blessed Jesus, respecting this very subject: *Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight.*

LETTER IX.

Respected Friends,

If there is any one doctrine of revelation, which the orthodox distinguish in point of importance from all others, it is the doctrine of the *Atonement.* My design in this Letter is, not to write a treatise on this subject, but to expose certain erroneous methods of reasoning respecting it, to clear away some of the objections and difficulties which have been supposed to attend it, and so to prepare the way for a fair consideration of its truth and importance.

Here, as in other cases, a regard to truth obliges me to say, that Unitarians have greatly misrepresented our opinions. The author of the sermon before us gives it as a part of the orthodox system, that "God took upon him human nature, that he might pay to his own justice the debt of punishment incurred by men, and might enable himself to exercise mercy." He undertakes in another place to express our opinion in still stronger terms: "that God took human nature, that he might appease his own anger towards men, or make an infinite satisfaction to his own justice;" and, after giving our opinion this shape, he asks very earnestly for one text where it is taught. We reply, that an opinion, *thus shaped and colored*, is taught nowhere in the Bible, and believed by no respectable Trinitarians. It is an essential part of our faith, that there is a real distinction between the Father and the Son, and that the distinction is of such a nature, that they are two and are in Scripture represented to be two, as *really* as Moses and Aaron, though not in a sense inconsistent with their essential unity. In consequence of this distinction, we consider it perfectly proper to say, that the Father sends the Son to die for sinners, and accepts the sacrifice he makes; that the Son obeys the Father, prays to him, and seeks his glory. We find that the Scripture does thus speak of them; and though in our view they both possess the same divine perfection, we believe that, in consequence of the distinction between them, this representation of Scripture is just. We pretend not, with minds so limited as ours, to be able to know the intrinsic nature or ground of this distinction; but its *results* we know, because the Bible reveals them; and we believe the distinction to be correspondent with what is thus revealed. So that it is something quite diverse from the form of sound words which we adopt, and quite diverse from our belief, to say that "God sent himself," — "that God took human nature, that he might appease his own anger, and enable himself to exercise mercy." If any writer should still say that, if the Son shares divine perfection with the Father, it is impossible there should be any such distinction as the Scripture makes between them; he would indeed repeat that which has been said by a succession of

writers, from the Fratres Poloni down to the present day, but which has had no better proof than strong affirmation.

But it is not to my purpose to go into any argument in proof of the personal distinction in the Godhead; but merely to say, that the passages above quoted from the sermon, and a multitude of other passages which might be quoted from Unitarian writers, are far from being a true and impartial representation of our faith. They are, indeed, calculated to slur the orthodox doctrine of the Atonement. But with every sober, honest man, the question will be, *are they just?* It is as plain to us as to this writer, that God, as God, cannot be a sufferer, or bear a penalty. And hence we infer the necessity of the incarnation. "The WORD," the divine Redeemer, "was made flesh," and thus was put into a capacity to suffer and die.

Our author and other Unitarian writers seem to think, that the idea which is conveyed to common minds by the orthodox system, is "that Christ's death has an influence in making God placable, or merciful, in quenching his wrath, and awakening his kindness towards men." This representation demands particular attention.

I observe then, that it is uniformly the sentiment of the orthodox, that *the origin, the grand moving cause of redemption, was the infinite love, benignity, or mercy of God;* and that it is purely in consequence of this love, that he appointed a Mediator, and adopted every measure which he saw to be necessary for the salvation of man. The goodness, mercy, or placability of God, considered as an attribute of his character, could then be neither produced nor increased by the atonement of Christ; as the atonement itself owed its existence wholly to that eternal, immutable goodness. This view of the subject, which we derive from John 3: 16, and many other texts of similar import, we inculcate with more than ordinary frequency and earnestness. We believe that it is essential to the honor of the divine character, and to the sincerity and comfort of Christian devotion. If we have ever made use of any language or indulged any opinions, in the smallest degree

unfavorable to this sentiment, we deplore the error we have committed.

But how happens it, that Unitarians have so often and so materially misapprehended our opinions on this momentous subject? The only occasion we have given for their misapprehension has been the use of *strong metaphorical language.* It has been common for some orthodox writers and preachers, especially when they have aimed to move the affections of men, or to impress the truth upon them deeply, to represent Christ as rescuing sinners from the wrath of God, shielding them from the arrows of his vengeance, appeasing, or turning away his anger, divesting his throne of its terrors, satisfying his justice, and delivering men from the demands of his dreadful law.

Now I pretend not that this language is exactly like the language of the Scriptures. But the resemblance is so great, that no objection can possibly lie against the one, which does not lie against the other. To make this perfectly clear, I shall give a few examples of the manner, in which both the Old Testament and the New frequently speak of God. Psalm 90: 7, "We are consumed by thine anger." Isa. 5: 25, "His anger is not turned away;" — 30: 30, "The Lord shall show the indignation of his anger;" — 40: 25, "He poured on him the fury of his anger;" — 66: 15, "The Lord will come to render his anger with fury." Hosea 11: 9, "I will execute the fierceness of mine anger." Deut. 29: 30, "The anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man." In other places the anger of the Lord is said to be kindled. It is said, that he is angry with the wicked every day; that he hath whet his sword; that he hath bent his bow, and made it ready; that he revengeth and is furious; and that he will meet his enemies, as a bear bereaved of her whelps. The writers of the New Testament sometimes use similar phraseology. They speak of the indignation and wrath of God, and represent vengeance as his prerogative. The Scriptures also represent God as turning or being turned from his anger, from the fierceness of his anger, and from his hot displeasure. This was the familiar language of history and devotion under the former

dispensation. And we well know that the God whom Moses, David, and the prophets worshipped, was the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It will be said, that the language above cited is *metaphorical.* Undoubtedly it is. And so is the language which is used by orthodox writers on the subject of the Atonement. The Scripture metaphors which I have brought into view, are drawn from the same sources and are of the same nature with those, which are objected to in the writings of the orthodox. And I am sure that no advocate for orthodoxy, how great soever the warmth of his natural temperament, and how glowing soever his imagination and his style, has ever, even in poetry, used bolder metaphors respecting God, than are found in the sacred writers. Where shall we find imagery more terrific, than in the passages of Scripture above quoted? And what advocates for the Atonement have employed language more highly figurative, than we find in those passages in which God is said to cause his anger to cease, or to be turned from the fierceness of his wrath? Even if we should familiarly speak of the Atonement in the language which this author thinks so exceptionable, and should represent it as designed to "render God merciful, to quench his wrath, and awaken his kindness towards men;" we might very safely rest our justification for the use of such metaphorical language, on the example of men who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Will it be said, that the bold metaphors above cited from the Scriptures, were peculiar to the idiom of the Eastern language, especially the language of the ancient Hebrews, and that they are inadmissible under the dispensation of the gospel? I grant that they belonged to the idiom of the ancient Hebrew writers. But it must be remembered, that Christ, in the most unqualified terms, recommended the Scriptures of the Old Testament to his disciples, and that the writers of the New Testament thought proper to quote, without palliation or explanation, some of the metaphorical passages referred to, and sometimes enlivened their own style with similar metaphors. And surely it cannot be thought strange that

a Christian minister, who is accustomed to entertain so high a reverence for the Holy Scriptures, and to look to them as containing everything pure and excellent both in matter and form, should infuse into his preaching or writing the same kind of metaphor, as that which abounds in them. It has generally been considered best by Unitarians, as well as by others, to *keep as near as may be to the peculiar phraseology of the Scriptures.* Why then are we blamed for doing it here? If Unitarians say that the language of Scripture above cited, is to be understood as *highly metaphorical;* why should they suppose that similar language in our sermons and books of divinity is to be understood *literally?* The moment they interpret our language as they interpret the figurative language of the Bible, the difficulty vanishes.

But what is the *meaning* of the metaphorical language under consideration? To satisfy ourselves on this subject, it is only necessary to consider the nature and design of metaphors, and the manner in which we learn their signification. In metaphorical language, words are taken out of their proper, literal sense, and, for the sake of illustration or impression, are used to denote other things, which are conceived to have some resemblance to what is denoted by the literal sense. It is essential to a metaphor, that there should be a real or apparent resemblance between the *proper* sense of the word, and the *metaphorical.* How then are we to interpret the metaphorical language of Scripture above cited? Does it imply that God himself is really like an angry, fierce, revengeful man, who is impelled by his outrageous passions to inflict pain and commit acts of violence? Infinitely otherwise. What the Bible makes known respecting God forbids it. Every divine perfection forbids it. And common sense forbids it. Nor is it the least objection to the use of this species of metaphor, that the literal sense would be contrary to truth, and would violate the plainest principles of religion. This is the case with respect to some of those metaphors which are considered most unexceptionable; as when God is called a rock, and when he is said to sit on his throne. In all such instances, common sense, properly enlightened, is competent at once to determine the import of the

metaphorical language. If a metaphor is taken from an object familiarly known, and is used with any degree of judgment or taste, we perceive instantly the point of similitude which is intended, and the meaning of the metaphor is perfectly obvious.

We say then, that the texts above quoted, do not imply that the *character* of God is in any degree like the character of a man who is impelled by his angry, malignant passions to acts of violence. They do not imply that anything like the feeling of revenge in man can ever belong to the God of love. The analogy intended is between the *effects* of anger and revenge in man, and the *effects* of what is called anger and revenge in God. But even here, careful restriction is still necessary. For the evils which God inflicts upon sinners, spring from *motives* totally different from human anger and revenge. Nor do the effects of the divine displeasure resemble the effects of human anger as to the *manner* in which they take place. But as to the *certainty* and *dreadfulness* of the effects, there is an obvious resemblance. In order to set forth how fearful and how inevitable is the punishment of the wicked, it is the custom of the inspired writers to resort to the most terrific objects in nature. To illustrate the dreadfulness of the displeasure of God against sinners, they point us to a man whose anger is fierce and consumes all before it, and even to a raging bear bereaved of her whelps. So terrible are the effects of God's holy displeasure.

If we have taken a correct view of the metaphors above cited, we are prepared to understand the metaphors employed on the other part of the subject. When God is spoken of as turning or being turned from the fierceness of his anger, or causing his anger to cease, the sense is that the dreadful *effects* of his righteous displeasure are removed. When a man's anger abates and his mind becomes tranquil, he ceases to inflict evil. In like manner, when the effects of God's holy displeasure are removed, he is said to turn or be turned from his anger; and if those effects were very dreadful, from the fierceness of his anger. And on the same ground, if any being in heaven or earth should do anything which, according to the principles of the divine government, would have

an influence to prevent or remove the evils that result from the displeasure of God; that being might be said to turn God from his anger, or render him merciful; and if the evils, thus prevented or removed, were great and dreadful, he might, by a still bolder figure, be said to "quench the wrath of God, and awaken his kindness towards men."

Now as this kind of metaphor is so abundantly used in Scripture, why may it not be used by those who make the Scripture their pattern and guide? And when they do use it, why should they not be understood, as using it in the same manner with those inspired writers from whom they borrow it? Why should not the same principles of common sense, candor, and good taste be applied to the interpretation of it in the one case, as in the other? If this were done, no objection could remain in the minds of Unitarians, certainly not in the mind of the author, against the language of orthodox writers respecting the influence of the Atonement. For he says, that many Unitarians, clearly meaning to include himself, "think that the Scriptures ascribe the remission of sins to Christ's death, with an emphasis so peculiar, that we ought to consider this event as having a special influence in removing punishment, as a condition or method of pardon, without which repentance would not avail us, at least to that extent which is now promised by the gospel." I am glad to find this development of Scriptural views; although there is a sinking phrase at the close of the sentence, which the Apostle Paul would never have written. It is then admitted as a fact, "that the death of Christ has a special influence in removing punishment;" that it is an indispensable condition of pardon, and the only consistent method in which salvation can be granted. Here we agree with Unitarians. This important fact is described by orthodox writers in various ways. It is the representation of some, particularly of those whose ardent temperament or poetic fancy makes them fond of glowing imagery, that the death of Christ quenched his Father's wrath, caused him to lay aside his thunder, and to look upon sinners with a smiling face; and that it turned a throne of vengeance into a throne of mercy. In such metaphorical lan-

guage as this, the just punishment of sin is likened to the effect of human wrath, of thunder, and of irresistible power in a king, who rises in frowning majesty to inflict condign punishment upon rebels; and the language teaches, that the punishment of sin, illustrated by such images, is prevented or removed by the mediation of Christ. The language, taken literally, would impute a character to God which would excite universal horror. But if understood according to the legitimate principles of interpreting metaphors, it teaches the simple but important truth, that the death of Christ was the means of procuring pardon, or the medium through which salvation is granted.

Another representation which is frequently made, and which is borrowed from Scripture, is, that Christ *bought* us, or *redeemed* us from destruction by the price of his own blood. This figure is drawn from the practice of redeeming captives from bondage by paying a price. The similitude, when exactly expressed, is this; as captives or slaves are released from bondage and restored to liberty by the payment of a satisfactory price; so sinners are delivered from just punishment and made heirs of heaven, by the atonement of Christ. Sometimes this same thing is spoken of by orthodox writers, as the payment of a debt. This figure is also derived from Scripture, which represents us, as God's debtors. Matt. 6: 12, "Forgive us our debts." Spiritual concerns are familiarly represented in the parables of Christ, by what takes place between debtors and creditors. As sinners we deserve punishment; that is, we owe it to the righteous Governor of the world to suffer evil for our sins. When Christ is said to pay our debt, it is signified, that by means of his sufferings he delivers us from punishment. This similitude does not relate to the exact mode of deliverance, nor to the nature of the evil prevented, nor to the nature of the good secured; but merely to *the fact* of his procuring deliverance by means of his death. As the debtor, who has nothing to pay and is confined to prison, is freed from imprisonment by the generosity of a friend, who steps forward in his name and pays his debt; so sinners are freed from punishment by the kindness of the Saviour, who interposed and shed his blood for them.

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us. The law denounced a punishment. This was its curse. Christ delivers us from that punishment, by being made a curse; that is, by suffering an evil which, so far as the ends of the divine government are concerned, was equivalent to the execution of the curse of the law upon transgressors.

When Christ is said to have *satisfied divine justice*, or the demands of justice, the sense is the same. In civil governments, if justice is satisfied, in other words, if that is done which perfectly answers the ends of justice; there is no further necessity of punishment. So, when Christ has done and suffered that which answers the ends of justice in the divine government, the necessity of punishment, so far as those ends are concerned, is superseded.

I might mention other forms of figurative language, which have been employed by respectable divines, to set forth the design and influence of Christ's death; and might say respecting them all, that if they were interpreted according to the same principles which govern us in the interpretation of the metaphorical language of Scripture, no difficulty would remain. I would therefore appeal to all those, who have duly considered the nature and just interpretation of metaphors, whether it is a mark of judgment or good taste, to overlook the metaphorical sense of the phraseology now under consideration, and to persist in treating it as though it could have no other than a literal sense. Against the literal sense there are indeed many objections. And there are as many against the literal sense of the texts of Scripture above recited. But against the metaphorical sense, there are no objections in either case.

But respecting these metaphors, I have two additional remarks. The first is, that some men, who profess to hold the general principles of orthodoxy, have evidently been led into error by mixing a degree of the literal sense with the metaphorical. Though they seem to interpret the phrases referred to as figurative, it is apparent that they still retain some impression of the literal sense. To this I think we can trace the notion, that if Christ has made

a perfect atonement and satisfied divine justice, those for whom he has done this are no longer under obligation to obey the law, and punishing them for their sins would be unjust. This would indeed follow from understanding some of the representations of Scripture and of orthodox writers in a literal sense. For if Christ paid our debt, or the price of our redemption *literally*, that is, exactly and in all respects, as a friend discharges the obligation of an insolvent debtor or purchases the freedom of a slave by the payment of money; it would certainly be unrighteous for us to be held to pay our own debt, or to suffer the evils of servitude.

To the same cause I ascribe it, that so many men have thought the doctrine of the atonement, or of salvation through the blood of Christ, unfavorable to the cause of morality. If the atonement be literally and exactly like the payment of what is due from an insolvent debtor; if it have such an effect, as to release the sinner from his obligation to render obedience to the law, or to take away his ill-desert, or to make it less just in God to punish; the doctrine would indeed be unfavorable to morality. But we deny that the atonement has any such analogy as is here implied, to pecuniary transactions; and we deny that the metaphorical language, which is taken from those transactions to illustrate the subject, indicates any such analogy. The atonement does indeed deliver sinners from punishment. But its influence is such, and operates in such a way, that the righteous authority of the law is confirmed, and that the undiminished obligations of sinners to obedience, their ill-desert, and the justice of their punishment are all set in the clearest light.

Another hurtful notion, which seems to spring from the same source, that is, from attaching something of a literal sense to figurative language, is, that God's requiring perfect satisfaction to his justice in order to the forgiveness of sin, or his determination not to save sinners, unless their debt is fully discharged by another, shows less benevolence, than if he should forgive and save by his own unpurchased goodness, without any satisfaction rendered by another. This notion often lurks in the minds of those who believe the doctrine of atonement, but whose faith is mixed with

obscurity, and perplexed with difficulties. By those who reject the doctrine of atonement, the same thing is urged as an objection against it. They contend, that the doctrine represents God to be mercenary, selfish, inexorable; and so makes his character much less amiable, than if he should forgive his disobedient but penitent children by free mercy, without requiring any satisfaction from another. "How plain is it, according to this doctrine," says our author, "that God, instead of being plenteous in forgiveness, never forgives; for it is absurd to speak of men as forgiven, when their whole punishment is borne by a substitute." Now this would be a real difficulty, if all the language employed in describing the atonement were to be taken literally. For surely a rich creditor, who imprisons a poor insolvent debtor, and refuses to release him till every farthing is paid by him or by his surety, shows much less kindness and generosity, than if he should give up the debt and release the poor debtor *freely*. And a father, who deals out to an offending child the full measure of justice, and withholds every token of paternal kindness till he receives the most perfect satisfaction, exhibits a much less amiable character, than if he should be inclined to hail the first opportunity of showing favor to his child, to meet him, while yet a great way off, to embrace him, and load him with kindness. But here the analogy fails. For God's refusing to forgive without satisfaction, is really an exercise not only of his justice, but of his goodness, as the guardian of his moral empire. His requiring full satisfaction to his justice, or a full atonement for sin, and his appointing that such an atonement should be made, resulted from benevolence. "God so *loved* the world, that *he gave his only begotten Son*." It shows far higher love for God to save in this way, than if he should save without an atonement, by an act of unpurchased mercy; which is only saying, that it shows greater benevolence in God, as moral governor, to save sinners in a way which will vindicate the honors of his violated law, and secure from injury the interests of his kingdom, than in a way which would expose his law to contempt, and the interests of his kingdom to injury. And this view of the subject must be obvious to every enlightened Christian, who is

disentangled from the literal sense of metaphorical language, and who attends to the whole account which the Bible gives, of the love which God has exercised and the measures he has pursued in the salvation of men.

It would lead me beyond my intention, to point out all those errors, which may be traced to the habit of giving a literal sense to the metaphorical language of the Holy Scriptures and of other writings, on the subject of the atonement. Having suggested instances of this sufficient to excite proper attention to the subject, I shall proceed to my second remark; namely; *when there is an evident tendency in the minds of men to understand any part of the metaphorical language, which has commonly been used respecting the atonement, in a literal sense, and when we perceive that this occasions misapprehensions; it is the dictate of Christian wisdom, to be sparing in the use of such language, and, when used, to guard it with some special care against its liability to be understood literally.* This caution I think should be applied to the language, which illustrates the atonement by pecuniary transactions, as the payment of a debt which a poor man owes, or purchasing his release from imprisonment. Nor would it be the part of wisdom at this day, to make a very copious use of those Scripture metaphors, which represent God as having the passion of anger or wrath, and the atonement as the means of quenching it, or turning him from it. An abundance of this species of metaphor is not expedient, because it is not so consentaneous to the genius of our language, as to that of the Hebrew; and especially, because the endless controversies and extravagant fancies which have prevailed in the world, have perplexed the minds of men, and exposed them to erroneous impressions on this subject. The object of language is to communicate useful truths to others. If it comes to be the case with any particular words or phrases, that they do not communicate such truths, it becomes expedient to explain them clearly, and sometimes to adopt new ones.

Socinian writers seem to suppose, that we overlook those numerous texts which, without any reference to the death of Christ, declare the free mercy of God towards penitent sinners. Here I

think it easy, by a few connected remarks, to remove all misapprehension, and to present the subject in a light which cannot fail to be satisfactory.

The doctrine now before us, divides itself into two parts; first, the *simple fact that God is merciful* and *will forgive* penitent sinners; second, the particular *way* or *method* of forgiveness. These two things are perfectly distinct in their nature, and may be subjects of distinct revelations. God may reveal to mankind, at one period of time, or in one part of his word, the *simple fact* of his mercy, or his readiness to forgive the penitent, without giving at that time, or in that part of Scripture, the least intimation of any medium through which his mercy flows. And the knowledge of this *simple fact*, without any other information, would be of vast importance. Now this *fact*, so important to guilty men, is made known in a great multitude of texts, both in the Old Testament and the New, where nothing is said of the *method* in which mercy is exercised. If this had been the case universally, and God had nowhere revealed anything, but simply that he would forgive the penitent; our faith must have been confined to that simple truth. As to the *way* or *method* in which the divine forgiveness would be exercised, we should know nothing, except that it must be consistent with the perfections of God, and the safety of his moral government. I grant that our faith, even if thus limited, might be a powerful principle of action, and an inexhaustible source of comfort. And in such a case, it would certainly be our duty to check the impatience of a prying curiosity, and to wait quietly, till God should see fit to give more light. But he has given more light. He has taught us expressly, in addition to what I have just stated, that his mercy is exercised towards penitent sinners *through the blood of Christ;* that forgiveness comes in this way, and in no other. Thus our faith is enlarged, by the greater extent of the revelation.

With regard to this last point, it is the opinion of some writers, who admit the doctrine of the Atonement, that nothing is revealed but the single truth, that forgiveness comes through the mediation of Christ; and that we are wholly incapable of knowing what par-

ticular bearing the death of Christ has upon the moral government of God, or *how* it secures mercy to penitent sinners. But careful attention to some texts of Scripture must lead to a different conclusion. I shall name only two. Gal. 3: 13, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." The text and what immediately precedes it, clearly teach, that men, as transgressors, are under the curse of the law, which they have transgressed; that Christ delivered them from that curse, that is, from the evil which the law denounced against them for sin; and that he did it *by being made a curse for them.* The Apostle's language must signify, that the curse which Christ was made, or the evil he endured, had respect to the same law from whose curse sinners were redeemed. It had respect to the same law; not that it was literally and exactly the penalty of the law, or the very punishment which the law threatened against sinners; but it had such a relation to the law and such an influence upon it, that sinners, on account of it, may be consistently released from its curse; whereas, had not Christ been made a curse for them, that is, suffered and died in their stead, they themselves must have endured the curse. Thus, although the curse of the law, falling on Christ, is in various respects different from what it would be, if it should fall upon sinners; yet, in relation to the ends of the law, or of the divine administration, it is substantially the same. And as those benevolent ends are secured by the curse falling upon Christ; it becomes consistent with God's justice and the order of his kingdom, for penitent sinners to be delivered from the curse.

The other passage I shall quote is Rom. 3: 24, 25, 26, "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God; To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Here the immediate object of Christ's being set forth is represented to be, to *declare or make known the righteousness of God.* It is

the opinion of most commentators and divines, that δικαιοσύνη has in this place its primary and common sense, and signifies that attribute of God which leads him, as moral Governor, to render to every man according to his deeds, and of course to inflict the curse of the law on sinners. The object of the death of Christ is then, to declare or manifest that God is righteous, and that in the salvation of sinners he will support the honors of his law and "the interests of virtue."

I ask myself, what hinderance there is in the way of God's showing the same favor to transgressors, as to the obedient. The answer is obvious. His law and his character as Lawgiver forbid it, and the interests of his moral kingdom forbid it. If, in the common course of his administration, he should show the same favor to transgressors, as to the obedient, he would set aside the authority of his law, and leave no visible distinction between virtue and vice. Any ruler, who should proceed in this way, would soon bring to an end the order and happiness of his subjects. The expedient which the wisdom of God has adopted, prevents this consequence of extending favor to transgressors. The cross of Christ makes known the righteousness or justice of God. It shows that he does make and will forever make a distinction between holiness and sin. It has such an influence, that he can be just, and the justifier of him that believeth; that is, can forgive sin without degrading his justice. In other words; the influence of the atonement is such, that it has become consistent with justice to do, what would otherwise have been totally inconsistent. In this way I come to a similar conclusion with the author of the sermon; namely, that Christ's death, "has an inseparable connection with forgiveness, that it has a special influence in removing punishment, as a condition or method of pardon, without which repentance would not avail us."

Correspondent with this is the practical view which devout Christians generally take of the subject. When they behold Jesus, who was holy, harmless, and undefiled, suffering and dying for sinners, they see the honors of God's righteousness vindicated, and the principles of his moral government established. They

consider the ends which are accomplished in the divine administration by the just punishment of transgressors, and all these ends they see accomplished by the death of Christ. And thus it becomes clear, that God can forbear to punish penitent transgressors on account of Christ's death, without any injury to his moral government, or any sacrifice of the interests of virtue.

Against our scheme, Unitarians urge an objection, which I shall here notice. The objection is, that the Trinitarian scheme lowers down the value of Christ's sacrifice, and "robs his death of interest." The alleged ground of this objection is, that we believe Christ to be God and man, united in one person, and that, as divinity could not be the subject of pain, the *sufferer* must have been merely a man.

This objection overlooks an important article in our system. We believe, that all the divine and human perfections which the Scriptures ascribe to Christ, constitute but *one person;* and consequently that all his actions and sufferings belong to him, *as* one person; much as all the actions and sufferings of any man, whether mental or corporeal, belong to him as one man. It results from this view of the subject, that the value or significancy of any action or suffering in Christ must be according to the dignity or excellence of his whole character. The action or suffering is attributable to his whole person, and derives its peculiar character from the character of his whole person, constituted as it is. The suffering of Christ was therefore of as high importance or value in making an atonement, as if it could have been and had been, in the proper sense, the suffering of the Divinity. So that whatever may be the conceptions of Arians or Socinians, as *we* view the subject, the fact that Christ endured suffering in his human nature, and not directly in his divine, occasions no difficulty as to the preciousness of his atonement.

The rejection of the doctrine of the Atonement is not to be regarded merely as a speculative error. For, after God has sent his Son to be a propitiation, and has told us that we must rely upon his atoning blood as the sole ground of forgiveness; if we

disregard that provision, and hope for heaven on the footing of our own virtue or good works, we manifest a temper of mind which is directly contrary to the humble spirit of Christian faith. We show that we think ourselves entitled to future happiness on our own account, and that we have no need of the merit or intercession of another to recommend us to the favor of God. Some Socinians boldly use language like this. They have the audacity to bring forward a personal claim upon the favor of God. The same spirit appears in all, who rest their hopes of heaven on their own goodness. Although God has provided a perfect righteousness as the foundation of their hope, and has taught them that the salvation of sinners depends on Christ crucified, and that no works of righteousness which they have done, and no accomplishments or dispositions which they possess, must ever be named in his presence; they still persist in spurning this provision of infinite mercy; in counting as foolishness the grand plea with which a Saviour's death has furnished them, and in obtruding their own virtue upon his notice as a better reason for their acceptance, than all the worthiness and all the grace of Christ crucified.

Thus far I have thought it necessary to proceed in order to remove misapprehensions, and to give a just though brief view of the sentiments we entertain on this momentous subject. It has, I trust, been made evident that our scheme of faith is far from sullying the glory of God's moral perfections, or impugning the principles of either justice or benevolence. On the contrary, it has for its foundation the immutable perfection of God's moral character, and the inviolable principles of his righteous government. And it is, if we know our own hearts, the strong attachment we feel to his glorious character and government, and our earnest desire that they may have the honor of a perfect and eternal vindication, which creates in us such an interest in the doctrine of the Atonement.

LETTER X.

Respected Friends,

My design in these Letters requires me particularly to bring into view one more doctrine, namely, the doctrine of *divine influence.* To those who entertain the same views with us of the character of man, and the nature and necessity of holiness, this doctrine must appear of the highest worth. But here as in former cases, instead of giving a regular treatise on the subject, it is my intention to correct mistakes, to expose the weakness of objections, to solve difficulties, and to do all I can to induce those who have rejected or half believed this doctrine, to inquire candidly into its truth and importance.

It has been the representation of Unitarians, that we believe in an invincible, overpowering, irresistible influence of the divine Spirit on the minds of men, which is totally repugnant to their moral agency and accountability, and which makes them entirely passive — mere machines.

In order that you may be under advantages to judge whether this representation is just, I shall make a brief statement of our doctrine, with the leading topics of argument which we urge in its support, and the explanations we are accustomed to give it in relation to other truths.

Our doctrine of divine influence results from the nature and condition of created beings, who are and must be dependent on their Creator and Preserver. This necessary dependence of an intelligent creature relates to the acts of the mind, as well as to outward circumstances. But we infer the doctrine more particularly from the fact, that men are sinners; that their moral nature is the subject of a most woful disorder. We think it the dictate of sound experience, that men will not cast off the dominion of their corrupt affections and render to God the homage of a sincere obedience, without special divine aid.

But the argument on which we ultimately rest, is the testimony of the sure word of God. They who attentively peruse the Scriptures will not fail to perceive, that this doctrine is there taught with great clearness, and in a great variety of forms. If God by his spirit produces no good affections in our hearts; if he vouchsafes no spiritual illumination; if he does nothing to cleanse us from sin and form us to holiness; what can be the import of those texts which teach, that God works in his people both to will and to do; that he creates in them a new heart and a new spirit; that he opens their eyes, draws them, turns, renews, strengthens them, and helps their infirmities? And what can be the meaning of the language which Christians use in prayer, when they ask God to subdue their sins, to purify their hearts, and to work in them all the good pleasure of his goodness; and when they ascribe to God all the good they possess? We understand the language of Scripture on this subject in its most obvious sense; and on this obvious sense we found our belief, that all virtue or holiness in man is to be ascribed to the influence of the divine Spirit, and that without the effectual agency of the Spirit, man would have no holy affections, and perform no acts of holy obedience. This is a general statement of the orthodox doctrine.

This doctrine has a relation to the attributes of God. In view of this relation we say, that the influence which God exerts in or upon his creatures, is such as agrees with his infinite perfections, such as results from them, and is suited to make a just exhibition of them. As the influence is directed to a good end, it is prompted by divine benevolence. It is regulated by divine wisdom, which renders it perfectly suited to accomplish that end. The doctrine has also an immediate relation to the human mind. In view of this relation we say, that the divine influence is adapted to the nature of the mind; that the Holy Spirit operates in such a manner as to offer no violence to any of the principles of our intelligent and moral nature; that it always produces its effects in the understanding according to the essential properties and laws which belong to the understanding, and in the will and affections, without interfering with any of the properties and laws

which belong to them. We consider this peculiar agency of the divine Spirit in producing and continuing holiness in men to be just as consistent with everything which belongs to an intelligent and moral nature, as the general agency of God in preserving and governing his rational creatures. Nor do we apprehend, that there is anything more incompatible with the nature of the mind in the influence which *God* exerts upon it, than in the influence which *we* exert upon it. It is a matter of fact, that we have an influence, often a controlling influence, over the understanding and will of our fellow creatures. The influence which others have upon us, be it ever so great and effectual, may operate, as we know, in a way perfectly correspondent with our moral nature. We are so constituted, that we may be influenced by others to do good, in consistency with our freedom and virtue and praiseworthiness; that is, we are none the less voluntary in doing good, and none the less deserving of approbation, because we are induced to do it by the influence which others exert upon our minds. I pretend not that the two cases are exactly parallel. But it is natural to suppose, that the divine influence is, at least, as consistent with our free agency and accountableness, as any human influence can be. Surely God who made us, can have access to our understanding and heart, and produce any effects which he pleases; and surely he must know how to do this, without infringing any of the principles of our moral nature. This, in our view, cannot be denied, without implicitly denying our dependence on God, and taking away his power to execute the plan of his own government. For if any man maintains that the special operation of the Holy Spirit is incompatible with the moral freedom of man; how can he consistently maintain the agency of God in his providence? And who that admits the Bible to contain truth unmixed with error, can doubt the constant agency of God in every part of the creation, and especially in the souls of his redeemed people?

It is in this manner we explain the doctrine of divine influence. It has been explained substantially in this manner from time immemorial. These relations of the subject to the perfections

and the government of God and to the moral agency of man, and the qualifications which necessarily arise from them, have been insisted upon with no ordinary zeal by orthodox divines. We assert neither the special agency of God in the kingdom of his grace, nor the common agency of God in his providence without asserting or implying that the agency is such, as secures to man the unimpaired exercise of all his rational and moral powers, — such as preserves his moral freedom entire. We treat the whole subject in such a way, as evinces to every man of reflection, that we understand it with these qualifications. We speak of man as being in the highest sense *active* in repenting, believing, and obeying. We represent repentance and obedience as his duties, and labor to persuade him to perform them. We urge motives to influence him as a moral agent; we present to him the rewards of obedience, and the punishment of disobedience; we exhort and reprove him, and in all respects treat him in such a manner as shows, that we believe the doctrine of man's moral agency as firmly as we believe that of the divine influence.

Now why do our opponents charge us with holding principles, which lead to the denial of man's freedom and accountableness? Is it because we assert the divine influence to be *powerful* and *effectual?* But how does it appear, that an influence upon the mind which is perfectly suited to its nature, has any more tendency to make man a machine or to destroy his freedom, when it is powerful enough effectually to accomplish its design, than when it fails of accomplishing it? Is it so with us? When we exert a powerful and effectual influence over a person, persuading him to relinquish some sinful indulgence, or to perform some virtuous action; do we, on that account, look upon him as any the less a free moral agent? Do we regard that determination of his mind and that conduct to which we persuaded him, as having no virtue, because he was led to it by our persuasive influence? Even if he should tell us that the influence of our arguments was *overpowering* and *irresistible;* we should consider this as a proof, not of the loss of his free agency, but of the strength of our arguments; and we should regard his ready submission to such

arguments, as evidence of a sound understanding and a commendable disposition.

The mode in which we exert our influence, is indeed widely different from that in which the divine influence is exerted. But the consideration of this difference will furnish a new argument in favor of our doctrine. For surely he who made intelligent creatures, and who unerringly knows their powers and properties, must be able to adapt his influence to their nature more perfectly than we can. These brief remarks are sufficient to show, how utterly they misconceive the subject, who think that the agency of God can extend only *so far*, can rise only to *such* a degree of efficacy, without interfering with the agency of man. The fact is, that the highest point of energy to which the divine agency can rise, interferes not in the least with the proper exercise of our rational and moral powers. The whole design and tendency of the influence which the Holy Spirit exerts over us, is to unshackle the mind from corrupt passion and prejudice, and, instead of encumbering and destroying moral agency, to conform its free exercises to the rules of virtue, and to improve and elevate all the moral faculties.

I ask again; is it supposed that the divine influence is incompatible with moral agency, because God exerts it upon us in a way so different from that in which we exert our influence; that is, without the use of language, or any outward signs; or because we do not perceive its operation upon us, as distinct from the acts of our own minds? To this I reply, that the invisibleness of the divine influence no more proves that it is not real and efficacious, than the invisibleness of the Creator, or of the act of creative power, proves that the Creator does not exist, or that his creative power was never exerted. Could we stand, as spectators, to witness the creation of a world, we should only see the *effect produced.* The cause would be *invisible.* But would this occasion any doubt as to the *reality* of that cause? In regard to the use of language, and other outward signs, it shows our imperfection, that we can have access to the mind in no other way. The direct access which our Creator has to the mind, is in all respects supe-

rior to what we are capable of; and of course his influence can never be supposed in the smallest degree to infringe moral agency.

But though we allow ourselves in the unfettered use of reason on this momentous subject, our ultimate reliance is on the oracles of truth. The inspired writers speak of the influence of the Spirit, as being in the highest degree *powerful* and *efficacious*, without the least appearance of apprehending that it is incompatible with human activity, or that there is any occasion to defend the doctrine against the objection above stated. Indeed they view the doctrine as a motive to activity: "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to do." In this practical use of the doctrine, there is the most evident propriety. For what can be a more animating encouragement to a man, who is struggling against the power of moral corruption, and is ready to sink under a sense of his weakness, than the assurance, that the divine Spirit will help his infirmities, and render his efforts successful? As the end of the Spirit's influence is to subdue sinful affection and excite that which is holy, the more powerful and efficacious that influence is understood to be, the more encouragement to diligence does the Christian derive from it.

The grand difficulty, which attends this subject, seems to arise from the supposition of some analogy between the power of God upon the human heart, and that exercise of power among men which shows itself in cases of *coercion* or *force*.

If they who object to our doctrine as incompatible with man's free agency, will examine their own thoughts carefully, they will find, I think, that their objection arises chiefly from the supposition of this analogy; — that it arises from the habit of comparing the effectual operation of the divine power on the mind and heart, with instances in which men are constrained by superior force to do or suffer that which is against their choice. Such analogy we deny altogether, and we deny every conclusion drawn from it.

I cannot leave this part of the subject, without remarking on

the unfairness of our opponents, in giving an extreme construction to the words *irresistible*, *overpowering*, *invincible*, *etc.*, when applied to the divine influence. I owe it to those who employ these words more freely than I do, to say, that such words are in good use, and will bear a sense perfectly unexceptionable. This I say, from a consideration of *the nature of the case.* Whenever these words are used, they are to be understood *relatively;* and the subject generally shows to what they relate. If I speak of an irresistible or overpowering *argument*, I speak of it with reference to that which might be supposed to make resistance, or to that which is to be overcome ; i. e. I speak of it with reference to some reason or objection which has been urged against the point to be proved, but which is now made to appear without force, or yields to an argument of *superior* force. Or the terms may relate to some opposing prejudice or passion, which is now weakened and subdued by the strength of the reasoning or the persuasiveness of the eloquence directed against it. Now who was ever so weak as to imagine, that an *irresistible*, *overpowering argument* had any tendency to interfere with the mental faculties, or to prevent the freedom of their operation, in any matter of moral agency ? We are accustomed to use these terms freely, and without fear of being misunderstood, in relation to any influence which a man exercises over the minds of others, either by his eloquence, his generosity, or his superior wisdom and piety.

I would have it remembered that, by this illustration, I mean only to evince that the words irresistible, unconquerable, etc., when applied by Calvinistic writers to the influence of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men, are not justly liable to the objection commonly urged against them ; because the nature of the case shows what their meaning must be. When we represent the influence of the Holy Spirit in sanctifying the hearts of men as *irresistible* or *overpowering*, we speak solely with reference to that which makes resistance and is to be overcome. Now in the divine work of sanctifying the hearts of men, or causing them to love God, is it possible to suppose that *moral agency* is to be overcome ? If their moral agency should be overcome, would that help to make

them holy? The thing to be overcome by the divine influence, is sinful inclination, corrupt affection. Men naturally love the creature more than the Creator. They are earthly in their desires, and disrelish divine things. This is the disease of their souls. The influence of the Spirit bears upon this moral disease. When we say that influence is *irresistible* and *overpowering*, our meaning is, that this disease of the soul, though very powerful and stubborn, is made to yield to the merciful agency of the divine Physician — that the remedy becomes *effectual*. The question really is, whether the *successful* operation of the divine Spirit — in other words, whether the *efficaciousness* of the remedy applied to the spiritual disorder of man, is destructive of his moral agency? I take it to be an admission of all who call themselves Christians, that the moral disease of man is *capable* of a *cure*, and that it is most desirable that it should be cured. If it is cured, it must be by a remedy suited to the nature of the disorder. What the nature of the disorder is, God perfectly knows; and is perfectly able to apply a *suitable* and *efficacious* remedy. Now when this almighty Physician undertakes the cure of our souls, the obstinacy of the disorder yields; its resistance is taken away; that is to say, the heart is effectually cleansed from its pollution; love of sin, enmity to God, pride, ingratitude, and selfish, earthly desires are *subdued*, and man is induced to love God and obey his commands. In other words, the sinner is so influenced by the Spirit of God, that he *freely* forsakes his sins, and devotes himself to the service of Christ. And this is the same as saying that, instead of exercising his moral agency *wrong*, he now exercises it *right*. The nature of the case shows, that this is and must be the meaning of the words under consideration, when applied by intelligent Christians to the influence of the Holy Spirit. I say, therefore, that they will bear a sense perfectly unexceptionable; and that this is the sense which naturally occurs, and which every man is obliged, by the rules of candor and sound criticism, to put upon them.

I have another reason for thinking that those, who use the terms under consideration, mean to use them in a sense which

does not infringe moral agency; and that is, that they uniformly speak of man, even when he is supposed to be the subject of that irresistible influence, as exercising an unimpaired freedom and agency; as *choosing* holiness, *refusing* sin, *loving* God, *obeying* the gospel. These are certainly acts of a free, moral agent. The plain meaning of those who speak of the influence of the Spirit as irresistible or overpowering, must therefore be, that the divine influence not only is *consistent* with moral agency, but actually produces, as its proper effect, those free exercises of moral agency which are required by the commands of God.

Now considering that the terms, which have been thus freely examined, are commonly used in cases somewhat similar to that of the divine influence, without ever being supposed to imply anything repugnant to the most perfect moral agency; considering also, that when they are used in reference to that influence, the nature of the subject shows to what they must relate, and in what sense they must be taken; and considering, finally, that those who use them make it perfectly manifest by other language respecting the subject, that they mean nothing which can interfere with any of the principles of moral action; I appeal to my readers, whether the outcry, which has been made against what is called the *resistless*, *overpowering* influence of the Holy Ghost in the conversion of sinners, is consistent with candor or with justice. I have long been convinced that there is a palpable unfairness and violence in the treatment which the orthodox have received on this subject. If, in describing the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit, any of us use language that is strong and impressive, — language which points to the power and obstinacy of the evil to be overcome, and to the certain efficaciousness of the remedy applied; our opposers labor to put upon that language the most unfavorable construction possible. Instead of fairly inquiring whether our words will admit of an unexceptionable meaning, and whether that unexceptionable meaning is the one which we aim to express; they seem, in many instances, to make it their object to find out a meaning which shall be marked with absurdity, and which shall expose to contempt the sentiment they wish

to confute. This is a heavy allegation. But I leave it to others to decide, whether the attempts which have frequently been made to decry this most precious doctrine of the effectual operation of the Holy Spirit in renewing and sanctifying the hearts of sinners, together with the want of candor, the heat and vehemence, which have been exhibited by at least some of our opposers, do not prove the allegation just?

I cannot but express my astonishment, that any who profess to be Christians should set themselves against the doctrine of the effectual influence of the Spirit. If we see a moral disorder in ourselves which we wish to be subdued, it would be reasonable to suppose that we should set a high price upon anything which would assist us in subduing it. And if the word of God reveals a divine agent, whose almighty energy effectually subdues the power of sin, those who have any right feelings must prize this as a most precious discovery. They must seek this heavenly influence as the most important blessing. The greater its energy, the more highly must they value it. Instead of feeling any objection against the notion of its being *irresistible* and *overpowering*, they must sincerely pray that it may be so to them. They know it is directed to the work of subduing sin, of purifying the heart, and guiding into the truth. They wish this work to be done effectually. Everything in them which makes resistance, they wish may be overcome. Their prayer is, "may God work effectually in us both to will and to do. We crave the operation of that efficacious, invincible power, which will subdue every corrupt affection, and sanctify us throughout in body, soul and spirit." Such must be the cordial prayer of every one who knows himself, and has a desire to be like the blessed Jesus. And I am constrained again to express my astonishment, that any can be found who calumniate or despise this doctrine of divine influence, which is one of the most distinguishing and precious doctrines of the Christian religion.

LETTER XI.

Respected Friends,

There are in the sermon before me a few passages of a general character, which I have not yet brought into view, but which cannot justly be suffered to pass unnoticed. To these I would now invite your attention.

I have already remarked on what I consider a palpable instance of injustice in many Unitarian writers; namely; that they represent certain opinions to be peculiarly and exclusively theirs, when in reality they are embraced and inculcated by the orthodox. The sermon furnishes some examples of this, in respect to the mediation of Christ, besides what I have before noticed. The author, in pursuance of his general design, gives a summary account of the views which he and his brethren entertain on this subject, and which, according to his representation, distinguish Unitarians from the orthodox. But in regard to these views *substantially*, I must say, that if Unitarians hold them, there is, thus far, no controversy between them and us. And the agreement of the two parties in these views should have been asserted; just as we assert that they are agreed with us in believing the existence of a God and the doctrine of a resurrection. So that if, by professing these views, the author gets any credit to himself and his brethren, in distinction from the orthodox, he gets it unfairly.

The following views respecting the mediation of Christ I now quote from the sermon, begging the author's consent that I should at the same time repeat them, as belonging to myself and my brethren.

"We believe, that Christ was sent by the Father to effect a moral, or spiritual deliverance of mankind; that is, to rescue men from sin and its consequences, and to bring them to a state of everlasting purity and happiness. We believe, too, that he accomplishes this sublime purpose by a variety of methods; by his instructions respecting God's unity, parental character, and moral government, which are admirably fitted to reclaim the world from idolatry and impiety, to the

knowledge, love, and obedience of the Creator; by his promises of pardon to the penitent, and of divine assistance to those, who labor for progress in moral excellence; by the light which he has thrown on the path of duty; by his own spotless example, in which the loveliness and sublimity of virtue shine forth to warm and quicken, as well as guide us to perfection; by his threatenings against incorrigible guilt; by his glorious discoveries of immortality; by his sufferings and death; by that signal event, the resurrection, which powerfully bore witness to his divine mission, and brought down to men's senses a future life; by his continual intercession, which obtains for us spiritual aid and blessings; and by the power with which he is invested of raising the dead, judging the world, and conferring the everlasting rewards, promised to the faithful."——"We believe, that Jesus, instead of making the Father merciful, is sent by the Father's mercy to be our Saviour; that he is nothing to the human race, but what he is by God's appointment; that he communicates nothing but what God empowers him to bestow; that our Father in heaven is originally, essentially and eternally placable and disposed to forgive; and that his unborrowed, underived, and unchangeable love, is the only fountain of what flows to us through his Son. We conceive, that Jesus is dishonored, not glorified, by ascribing to him an influence, which clouds the splendor of divine benevolence."——"Whilst we gratefully acknowledge, that he came to rescue us from punishment, we believe that he was sent on a still nobler errand, namely, to deliver us from sin itself, and to form us to a sublime and heavenly virtue. We regard him as a Saviour, chiefly as he is the light, physician, and guide of the dark, diseased, and wandering mind. No influence in the universe seems to us so glorious, as that over the character; and no redemption so worthy of thankfulness, as the restoration of the soul to purity. Without this, pardon, were it possible, would be of little value. Why pluck the sinner from hell, if a hell be left to burn in his own breast? Why raise him to heaven, if he remain a stranger to its sanctity and love?"——"We believe, that faith in this religion is of no worth, and contributes nothing to salvation, any farther than as it uses these doctrines, precepts, promises, and the whole life, character, sufferings, and triumphs of Jesus, as the means of purifying the mind, and of changing it into the likeness of his celestial excellence."

These views are all ours; and we are happy to express them in the simple, elegant, and forcible language of this sermon. And we would indulge the hope, that the injustice of representing them as *peculiar* to Unitarians in distinction from the orthodox, will not be repeated. We have, indeed, other and higher views, as you may have already perceived, respecting the mediation of Christ; but none incompatible with these. And let me say, it is very evident to us, that those other and higher views respecting the atonement and mediation of Christ, invest all the practical views above

exhibited with new beauty and force, and render them, in a higher degree, effectual in promoting a devout and holy life.

I now proceed, with increasing surprise, to notice the same species of injustice, respecting *the nature of Christian virtue, or holiness.* The injustice, which I now charge against this sermon, lies in this: that orthodox ministers and Christians are held up to public view, as rejecting the sentiments here referred to, respecting the nature of holiness, when, in fact, all that is valuable in these sentiments, is insisted upon by various orthodox writers who are held in the highest estimation. Those who are acquainted with the writings and the preaching of orthodox ministers, and with the general sentiments of orthodox Christians, will have no difficulty in determining, whether impartial justice is here rendered us. I speak in the name of my brethren generally. Do not *we* believe, as well as Unitarians, "that the moral faculties of man are the grounds of responsibility, and the highest distinctions of our nature, and that no act is praise-worthy any further than it springs from their exertion?" When we speak of the influence of God's Spirit on the mind of man, do not we, as well as Unitarians, "mean a moral, illuminating, and persuasive influence, not physical, not compulsory?" Do not we, as well as they, "give the first place among the virtues, to *the love of God?*" Do not we believe, "that this principle is the true end and happiness of our being; that we were made for union with our Creator; that his infinite perfection is the only sufficient object and true resting place for the insatiable desires and unlimited capacities of the human mind; that the love of God is not only essential to happiness but to the strength and perfection of all the virtues; that conscience, without the sanction of God's authority and retributive justice, would be a weak director; that benevolence, unless nourished by communion with his goodness,—— could not thrive amidst the selfishness and thanklessness of the world;—— and that God — is the life, motive and sustainer of virtue in the human soul?"

Do not we believe, as well as this author and his brethren, "that great care is necessary to distinguish the love of God from

its counterfeits?" Do not we "think that much which is called piety is worthless?" Should not we be as ready as they are, to say, that "if religion be the shipwreck of the understanding, we cannot keep too far from it,"—and "to maintain that fanaticism, partial insanity, and ungovernable transports, are anything rather than piety?" Is it not as favorite an opinion with us, as with them, "that the true love of God is a moral sentiment, founded on a clear perception and consisting in a high esteem and veneration of his moral perfections?" This author says in the name of his brethren, "We esteem *him*, and *him only*, a pious man, who practically conforms to God's moral perfection and government; who shows his delight in God's benevolence by loving and serving his neighbor; his delight in God's justice by being resolutely upright; his sense of God's purity, by regulating his thoughts, imagination, and desires; and whose business, conversation and life are swayed by a regard to God's presence and authority. In all things else, men may deceive themselves. Disordered nerves may give them strange sights, and sounds, and impressions. Texts of Scripture may come to them, as from heaven. Their souls may be moved, and their confidence in God's favor be undoubting. But in all this there is no religion. The question is, do they love God's commands,—and give up to these their habits and passions? Without this, ecstasy is a mockery. One surrender of desire to God's will is worth a thousand transports. We do not judge of the bent of men's minds by their raptures, any more than we judge of the direction of a tree during a storm. We rather suspect loud profession; for we have observed, that deep feeling is generally noiseless, and least seeks display."

To all these views we most cordially subscribe. A man, who should undertake to exhibit elegantly, and in a few words, what Edwards wrote on Religious Affections, could not do it better, than in the language of this author. Edwards and Bellamy, and many other authors, most highly esteemed among the orthodox in New England, have labored with great assiduity and success to distinguish true religion from its counterfeits, to put down all the excitements and transports which spring from human imagination or

passion, and to recommend that religion, which consists in conformity to God's moral character and obedience to his law. And if the author of this sermon should call to mind all the theological works with which he was once conversant, he would doubtless find, that in regard to these very sentiments, which he represents as peculiar to Unitarians, he is under no small obligation to orthodox writers. No writers have ever shown better than those above mentioned, "that religious warmth is only to be valued, when it springs naturally from an improved character; when it comes unforced; when it is the warmth of a mind, which understands God by being like him; and when instead of disordering, it exalts the understanding, invigorates conscience, gives a pleasure to common duties, and is seen to exist in connection with cheerfulness, judiciousness, and a reasonable frame of mind." This sermon simply asserts these just and important sentiments; but the writers above named have largely illustrated and confirmed them. And with orthodox ministers in New England, this distinction between true piety and its counterfeits is very frequently the subject of preaching and conversation. Probably however, we still fall short of our duty. And we ought to deem it a favor, if any one shall come forward to chastise our negligence, and to excite us to greater fidelity in this momentous concern, even though in doing it, he may deny us the credit of sentiments which we hold as precious as our life.

This author proceeds. "Another important branch of religion, we believe to be love to Christ. The greatness of the work of Jesus, the spirit with which he executed it, and the sufferings which he bore for our salvation, we feel to be strong claims on our gratitude and veneration. We see in nature no beauty to be compared with the loveliness of his character; nor do we find on earth a benefactor, to whom we owe an equal debt." Does all the honor and happiness of entertaining such views as these belong exclusively to Unitarians? Do these sentiments respecting Christ distinguish them from the orthodox? I would ask the same question respecting most of the observations which this author makes on

the *benevolent virtues?* Is it a *peculiar*, *distinguishing* mark of Unitarians, to attach great importance to these virtues?

Without proceeding any further, it must be evident to my readers, that they cannot without examination, repose full confidence in the representations which are found in this sermon, respecting the sentiments of the orthodox. On such a subject, and with respect to such a writer, I should have preferred silence. But I knew it could not be made consistent with truth and propriety, that those ministers and Christians who are denominated orthodox, should lie under the reproach of rejecting a great number of the most obvious principles of religion — principles which they believe to be of vital importance to the system of Christianity, and which they maintain with a seriousness and ardor which bear ample testimony to the sincerity of their faith.

On this subject, as well as on every other which is introduced into these Letters, I feel happy in addressing myself to those, who have chosen *candor and liberality*, as the honorable badge of their party. Let me ask you then, my respected friends, whether it can detract anything from the value of those truths which you believe, that they are believed also by the orthodox; and whether the honor of believing them would be any the less to you, if it should be shared equally by us? What end, then, can this author seek to accomplish, by making a selection of some of the most unexceptionable, most amiable, most attractive truths of religion, and representing them as belonging peculiarly to Unitarians, and as distinguishing them from us, when in fact we believe them as sincerely as they do? Possibly credit and influence may in this way be secured to Unitarians. But are they secured *justly?* And possibly reproach or disgrace may be cast upon us. But is it *deserved?* And pray tell me, what good end can be answered by possessing credit which is unjustly acquired, or by inflicting disgrace which is not merited? This author advances much to which we most cheerfully subscribe, in praise of candor and charitable judgment toward those who differ from us. He says: "There is one branch of benevolence, which I ought not to pass over in silence, because we think that we conceive of it more

highly and more justly, than many of our brethren." And he shows how strongly he reprobates the conduct of a Christian, who is "covered with badges of party, who shuts his eyes on the virtues, and his ears on the arguments of his opponents, *arrogating all excellence to his own sect.*" I am sorry there is such an inconsistency between these charming passages in the sermon, and those others on which I have animadverted.

There is one passage respecting moral government, upon which I would detain you a few moments. "If there be any principle of morality," says this author, "it is this, that we are accountable beings, only because we have consciences, and a power of knowing and performing our duty; and that in as far as we want this power, we are incapable of sin, guilt, or blame. We should call a parent a monster, who should judge and treat his children in opposition to this principle; and yet this enormous immorality is charged on our Father in heaven." The author would evidently impute this gross impiety to the orthodox. And yet I must say, in their behalf, that the principle for which he contends, properly explained and guarded, is *ours*, as well as *his*. We believe that this principle is inwrought into our moral nature; that every man feels its truth; that every judgment he passes upon his own actions, and every conviction of duty, implies a practical acknowledgment of it; in a word, that it is one of those principles which need no arguments to prove them, because they are themselves plainer than anything which can be adduced as proof.

The views which we entertain of the moral corruption of man, whether original or superinduced, and in whatever degree it may exist, are perfectly consistent with the principle, "that we are accountable beings, only because we have consciences, and a power of knowing and performing our duty." * Indeed, such are

* In these paragraphs, the word *power* was used to denote all those faculties and capacities which constitute men accountable agents, the proper subjects of a moral law; in other words, *natural* power, in distinction from *moral*. We express the same thing, when we say, man has no *natural* inability to perform his duty; that is, he has no want of any of the powers and faculties which essentially belong to moral agents, and nothing which hinders him from obedience, but his depraved

our notions of the nature of an intelligent, moral being, that we conceive it to be utterly impossible, that any degree of depravity should take away his conscience, or his power of knowing and doing his duty. These are inseparable properties of an accountable creature in all stages of his existence, and whatever may be his circumstances or his character. He cannot be subject to law, or accountable for his actions, without these properties, any more than he can without a soul. It is with these views, we hold the doctrine of man's depravity. We believe it, not in such an unrestricted, absolute sense as is sometimes supposed, but with all the limitations, which result from its connection with other acknowledged truths. Explanations, like those above suggested, ought always to be considered as making a part of our faith; and in this case they are peculiarly necessary, on account of the facility with which the doctrine comes into alliance with various pernicious errors. Let it therefore be remembered, that if any one represents us as believing, that men are depraved in such a sense that their conscience, or their power of knowing and doing their duty is taken away, or any principle of free moral agency infringed; in other words, if any one represents us as believing the doctrine of depravity in such a sense, as makes it any less fit and proper, that God should place men under a moral government, and address to them commands, promises, and threats, than if they were free from corruption; they give a representation of our views as really incorrect, as if they should accuse us of holding, that, in consequence of men's depravity, they have no eyes to see the light of the sun, and no ears to hear the noise of thunder.

If there is any principle respecting the moral government of God, which the orthodox clergy in New England earnestly labor to inculcate, it is this; that, as accountable beings, *we have a conscience, and a power of knowing and performing our duty.* I

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disposition, his wicked heart. This distinction between *natural* and *moral power*, *natural* and *moral ability* and *inability*, is clearly and very satisfactorily made by Edwards, Watts, Fuller, and many others.

urge it, therefore, as a matter of justice, that how earnestly soever the author of this sermon might have been disposed to censure the opinions of some others, he ought to have made an express exception in *our* favor.

LETTER XII.

Respected Friends,

I have reserved, as the last subject of discussion, *the practical influence* of the system embraced by the orthodox.

To my mind it is exceedingly obvious, that representations are often made on this subject, which are radically erroneous, and that, by these means, an impression is produced on the feelings of many, hostile at once to their personal welfare and to the interests of religion. Such representations ought to be corrected, and the subject, which must be considered as highly important, to be set in a true light. The salutary influence of the orthodox system has been often illustrated, and has appeared to me so perfectly clear, that it has been a matter of astonishment that any intelligent man should entertain a doubt respecting it. The most candid construction, which I have been able to put upon the opinions and representations of our opponents, as to the practical tendency of orthodoxy, is, that they take an erroneous view of the system itself. They overlook its genuine features, and see or think they see deformities from which it is free. Now admitting this to be the case, I can easily account for it, that they should believe its moral tendency to be so mischievous. If the system of the orthodox were, in truth, what Priestley and Belsham, and the author of this sermon have represented it to be; its consequences would indeed be *pernicious*. So I might say, if *Christianity* were that monstrous thing which infidel philosophers have

represented it to be; the opposition and hatred, which have risen up against it would have been just. But it is not so. And the advocates for Christianity have a right to say, and are bound to say and to prove, that it is a system of consummate excellence; that the enmity of its opposers against it has been unjust and criminal; that it merits the highest attachment, and that it is fraught with inestimable blessings. I would not make a reproachful comparison. But the orthodox system is not what Unitarians have declared it to be. Its genuine features are not seen at all in the picture which they have drawn of it. Now the question to be discussed is, not whether such a system of doctrines as Unitarians impute to the orthodox is mischievous in its tendency; but what is the influence of the *system* which we *really believe and teach?*

The author of this sermon thinks, that it is "unfavorable to devotion;" — "that it takes from the Father the Supreme affection which is his due, and transfers it to the Son;" — "that it awakens human transport, rather than that deep veneration of the moral perfections of God, which is the essence of piety;" — "that it robs Christ's death of interest, — weakens our sympathy with his sufferings, and is, of all others, most unfavorable to a love of Christ, founded on a sense of his sacrifices for mankind;" — "that it discourages the timid, gives excuses to the bad, feeds the vanity of the fanatical, and offers shelter to the feelings of the malignant;" — "that it tends strongly to pervert the moral faculty, to form a gloomy, forbidding, and servile religion, and to lead men to substitute censoriousness, bitterness, and persecution, for a tender and impartial charity;" — that it is a "system, which begins with degrading human nature, and may be expected to end in pride." Priestley, Belsham, and others, in accordance with this author, have represented the system of orthodoxy to be *rigorous, gloomy, and horrible — the extravagance of error — a mischievous compound of impiety and idolatry.*

It would be a sad case, if the Unitarians above named had no better proof to offer of a candid, liberal spirit, than what they have given in these severe but unsupported censures. I might very

safely leave such censures without any remark, — trusting that their extreme violence would be sufficiently visible to prevent any unfavorable effect which they might be likely to produce. But I have an object in view, which requires me not to pass over this subject lightly. I wish to give a direct elucidation of the real influence of the system which the orthodox believe.

I shall first inquire, whether the grand and obvious properties of that system are not adapted to produce a good influence *in a general view* on those who embrace it. After this, I shall advert to some particular parts of Christian virtue and duty, and inquire in what way they are likely to be affected by the orthodox system.

What then are the grand, obvious properties which a system of religion must have, in order to produce a good influence on those who embrace it?

First. It must exhibit *a Being of infinite perfection, as the object of worship.* If there is anything faulty in the character of him whom we worship, it will, according to a well known principle, have a bad effect upon our character. But the God whom *we* love and adore, must not be described by our opposers. Or, if they do describe him, their description must not be received instead of ours. The orthodox have described the character of God as infinite and immutable in every divine perfection — as amiable and glorious in the highest possible degree. Is not such a God worthy of supreme love and adoration? And can the sincere worship of such a Being fail to promote moral purity in us? Will not the habit of affectionately and devoutly contemplating the perfect justice and benevolence which we ascribe to God, have a powerful tendency to make us just and benevolent? We are accused of worshipping a Being who is unjust, partial, and malignant. And it is a matter of course that we should be accused of imitating that injustice, partiality and malignity, which are thought to belong to the character of him whom we worship. But it remains to be proved that such attributes do in fact belong to the Being who is the object of our adoration. This has often been affirmed by our opponents; but their unsupported affirmation

cannot surely be admitted as proof, in opposition to the most sober declaration on our part that we ascribe to God infinite justice and benevolence. But there can be no occasion to enlarge on this topic after what I have written in Letter III. If you have carefully attended to the views there expressed of the character of God, and can have confidence enough in me to believe, that they are indeed the views which I and my brethren entertain; I will add nothing but an appeal to your judgment, whether the worship of such a God can be otherwise than salutary to the cause of virtue.

Secondly. A scheme of religion, in order to have a good moral influence, must exhibit *a moral government marked with holiness and righteousness throughout.* There must be a holy and benevolent Sovereign, who by a system of wise and good laws requires of his subjects that conduct which is necessary to the order and happiness of his kingdom. In his administration, he must show a constant regard to the principles of his government, and an invariable determination to give them support and efficiency. The authority of the law, and the character of holiness and justice in the Lawgiver, must be sustained by the influence of a penalty; — a penalty, the execution of which shall spread an impression of awe through the universe, at the sight of God's high displeasure against sin. Now does not the system of religion which the orthodox maintain, exhibit a moral government possessing all these properties? Does it not constantly hold up to view a Supreme Ruler who is perfectly holy and benevolent? Does it not inculcate upon all men a wise and holy law, as of immutable obligation? Does it not constantly teach, that the Governor of the world loves holiness and abhors sin, and that he manifests an invariable determination to support the principles of a righteous moral government? Does it not exhibit with tremendous force, the sanctions of the law, — that is, the everlasting happiness of the obedient, and the everlasting punishment of transgressors? Is not the penalty of the law, as we represent it, awful in the highest degree, and so fitted, as far as anything of the nature of penalty can be, to prevent transgression? Will not men be

prompted to obedience, according to their impression of the certainty and the greatness of the evil which will be consequent upon sin? In this respect, has not the orthodox system most obviously the advantage over its opposite? Have we not always been reproached by those, who would gladly lower down or disannul the sanctions of the law, for displaying in too strong colors the certainty and the dreadfulness of future punishment? And is it not true, that those who soberly admit the views which we give of the displeasure of God against sin, and the punishment with which he will recompense it, find it more difficult than others, to keep their minds in a state of inconsideration and sinful repose? I appeal to all attentive observers, whether there is not the greatest and most sensible repugnancy between a life of ungodliness, and the representation we make of the divine government? And does not this fact account for much of the opposition which our views of religion have always had to encounter among men, who are too proud to bear reproof, too fond of quiet to submit willingly to what would disturb them, and too earthly to yield to the attractions of a devout and spiritual life?

That the interests of virtue may be secure, *the exercise of mercy towards offenders* must be so regulated, that the divine law shall be magnified, and its sanctions exercise all their power over the consciences and hearts of men. This is one of the main points in the orthodox system. I shall not now enter on the particulars which make up the system in this respect, but shall merely state what we conceive to be its practical result, and on account of which, more than for any other reason, we feel so much interest in its support.

According to our views of the intervention of Christ, the salvation of sinners reflects no dishonor upon the character of God as a moral Governor. He appears to his subjects to be as just and true, and awakens as deep an awe in their minds, when he *forgives* as when he *punishes*. In consequence of this, God's rational creatures find in his administration as powerful motives to deter them from transgression and induce them to obedience, as if they saw in fact that the penalty of the law in all its dreadfulness was

inflicted upon every transgressor. So that while rebels against God are pardoned, his law loses none of its authority or influence; the interests of virtue are not sacrificed; and the glory of justice and truth is in no degree tarnished. Nay, all the attributes of God acquire the lustre of a higher display, and all the principles of his benevolent and righteous government a more powerful ascendency. Accordingly, those who are placed under this dispensation of mercy, are moved to repentance and obedience by the high authority of a perfect moral government, and by all the attractions of infinite compassion and grace. Thus our system of religion, in regard to the work of redemption, is calculated to promote the cause of holiness in the highest degree. It is stamped with perfect holiness throughout. It exhibits a holy God, who is constantly engaged in administering a holy government. It proclaims a pure and holy law, and enforces it with the most weighty sanctions. It brings to our view a holy Redeemer, who gave a perfect vindication and support to that law. It presents a holy salvation, to be obtained through the influence of a holy Intercessor, and by the persevering efforts of a holy faith. Everything with which we have to do in this great concern, bears the stamp of holiness, and tends to promote holiness in us.

Now tell me candidly, whether the system of orthodoxy, some features of which have now been portrayed, is not of as holy a nature and of as purifying a tendency, as the system which Unitarians adopt? Do we not exhibit as holy a God, as righteous a law, and as high sanctions to enforce it, as they do? Is not the tribunal to which we point men, as just, and the sentence of which we forewarn them, as momentous and decisive, as that which Unitarians teach us to expect? Do we not hold forth a blessedness as desirable, and a punishment as dreadful, as they? And in regard to the work of redemption; does not our scheme present as complete a vindication of the violated law and government of God, as theirs? Does it not show as much respect to the interests of virtue? Does it not demand holiness with as commanding an authority, and allure men to it by as melting a display of kindness? Does it not present as bright examples of

moral excellence, divine and human? What then is wanting to give the religious system, which we embrace, the most salutary influence upon the character and conduct of men?

As to practical influence, any religious system is in reality, what it is to those who cordially embrace it, not what it is or what it appears to be to those who reject it. I doubt not that a trial of the orthodox system by this rule, would end in its favor. Enlightened Christians who seriously believe this system, do, if I mistake not, find in it motives, in great variety and of powerful efficacy, to universal holiness. I should however feel a reluctance, in reasoning on this subject, to do what some writers have done; that is, to institute a comparison between the orthodox and Unitarians in respect to character. For although orthodox believers have, in different periods achieved much for the welfare of man, and have in many instances exhibited an elevation of Christian virtue, which has been an honor to the grace of God; instances enough of a contrary character occur, to make us blush; and even those who have reached the highest point of goodness, have fallen far short of the attainments they ought to have made under the influence of such powerful motives. Instead, therefore, of making any boasting comparisons, I would join with those who are humble and contrite in heart, in the deepest lamentations over that perverseness which counteracts the influence of the most holy motives — over that obstinate disease of our nature which renders the best means of cure so ineffectual.

But my object is to ascertain what is the practical *tendency* of our system, or the influence which it is suited to have, in comparison with the opposite system.

I shall proceed therefore, as was proposed, to inquire what influence the orthodox system is likely to have upon particular parts of Christian virtue and piety.

1. *Love to God.* The more exalted our conceptions of his natural and moral attributes, the more likely are we, other things being equal, to abound in love. Now it is as evident to me as the light of noon, that the system of orthodoxy clearly exhibits the perfections of God, and invests them with the highest glory. It

teaches us to acknowledge his infallible wisdom and his unlimited benevolence in all his works. In view of all the evils which fall to our lot or to the lot of others, it teaches us not only to submit to his sovereign power, but to admire his paternal goodness. Those very measures of government, which our opponents think irreconcilable with his moral perfection, appear to us bright illustrations of it. In every point of view, the faith we embrace is suited to excite love to God, and to give to that love the character of constancy and ardor.

2. *Gratitude to God.* In proportion to the impression we have of his kindness to us, will this affection be excited. If we believe that God, from the impulse of his own compassion, has bestowed upon us a favor of infinite value and wholly undeserved; we shall feel a stronger motive to gratitude, than if we consider the favor bestowed of inferior value, or suppose that we have any personal claim to it. According to this principle, those views of redemption, which we have been taught to consider as the dictates of Scripture, are fitted to raise gratitude to the highest pitch. We look upon ourselves to be in such a state, that it is the greatest achievement of infinite benevolence, to save us. We see from what an abyss of guilt and wretchedness God delivers, and what an exceeding great and eternal weight of glory he bestows. And we see that this deliverance from guilt and wretchedness, and this eternal glory were purchased by the precious blood of Christ. With these views, we are constrained to anticipate that song which is prompted by the gratitude of saints in heaven; "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, — to him be glory and dominion forever and ever."

With respect to gratitude, it is perfectly easy to make a comparison between the influence of our system and that of our opponents. Unitarians may gratefully acknowledge the goodness of their Creator in forming and upholding them, and in the common bounties with which his providence blesses them. They may admire his benevolence too in providing, as they conceive he has done, for their happiness in a future state. And they may set a high price upon the various means of moral improvement which

they enjoy. But their system does not tend like ours, to excite those high and tender emotions of gratitude, which spring from a consciousness of criminality and unworthiness. It is easy to compare the sensations of a man, who has been rescued from the danger of perishing in the ocean by some heroic effort of benevolence, with the sensations which are produced by the common acts of kindness. It is easy to conceive too, how those sensations of the drowning man would be heightened, if his deliverance was effected by the disinterested kindness of one whom he had often wounded by injuries, and especially, if the danger from which he was rescued, was the immediate consequence of his own unprovoked hostility. Such a generous effort of compassion, heightened by circumstances like these, would do all that an act of human kindness could do to turn a heart of stone into a heart of flesh, to call forth all the tenderness of gratitude, and to fix a sense of obligation never to be obliterated.

The principle of this comparison is inseparable from our nature; and the result of the comparison will show, that the religious sentiments which we entertain, are adapted not only to produce gratitude, but to give it the greatest degree of strength and tenderness of which the human mind is capable. According to our scheme of faith, we are sinners without excuse. We have lifted up our hand against our Maker, and proved ourselves his enemies. We have thus brought ourselves upon the brink of hopeless destruction. Our Father in heaven has interposed, and by an act of unparalleled love, and at an expense which the creation could not pay, has delivered us from that hopeless destruction, and given us an inheritance in the heavens. Compared with this act of divine love, the noblest exploits of benevolence ever performed by man, lose all their splendor, and all their power to move the heart. The kindness and grace of God exercised towards us in this glorious work, will excite a holy gratitude which will swell the hearts of the redeemed forever, and transfuse a celestial ardor, inexpressibly delightful and pure, into their everlasting songs. Nor are those, who cordially yield themselves up to the influence of these views, strangers to this holy affection even now. It often glows

in the heart of the young disciple of Christ. It often cheers the spirits of Christians in every stage of their progress towards heaven, and prompts them to bless God for his goodness even in affliction. It kindles a celestial light in their souls on the bed of languishing; and in the hour of death, it awakens in them sensibilities which, amid the weakness and agonies of dissolving nature, struggle to utter themselves in "thanks to God for his unspeakable gift."

3. *Love to Christ.* The bare mention of this virtue will lead at once to the obvious result of the comparison which I have instituted between the two systems. For surely that system must be admitted to have the strongest tendency to excite love to Christ, which ascribes to him the highest excellence of character. The different systems of Unitarians ascribe to him various degrees of created and limited excellence. The orthodox system clothes him with eternal and infinite excellence. Those who embrace this system, feel it to be their duty and privilege to love Christ with the most exalted affection, — an affection without any limits, except those which arise from the finiteness of their capacities. But Unitarianism forbids this high and unlimited affection to Christ. It tells us we are in danger of overrating his character. It begets a fear of regarding him with too high a veneration. When we have hearts which wish to express their ardor in the adoring language of Thomas, "my Lord and my God;" it thrusts itself before us, and tells us to forbear. Whereas the system of orthodoxy calls us to raise our love to Christ to a higher and higher degree. It tells us he has an excellence and glory which our affection can never reach. It makes our blessedness in a future world to consist very much in clearer discoveries of his divine perfections, and in exercising towards him a more exalted, more uninterrupted love.

4. *Faith in Christ.* The same general remarks apply to this point as to the last. Believing or trusting in the Saviour is represented as one of the great duties of the Christian religion. But surely that faith in Christ, which results from the principles of our opponents, must be a very different thing from that which our sys-

tem inculcates. Under the influence of the doctrines which we believe, we repose a confidence in his atoning blood which relieves us from the agitations of guilt, and inspires us with humble, joyful hope; a confidence in his power and wisdom and goodness, which puts our hearts at rest respecting all the concerns of the creation. Our own interests, temporal and eternal, we commit entirely to his care. We trust in him for all that is necessary to purify our hearts, to guide and protect us during our pilgrimage, to comfort us in affliction, and to give us peace and triumph in the prospect of death. And when the time of our departure draws near, we hope to look up to our merciful Redeemer, and with a confidence in his infinite grace which quells every fear, to say, "*Lord Jesus, receive my Spirit.*" Does such a faith spring from the principles which Unitarianism inculcates?

5. *Dread of sin and watchful care to obey the divine precepts.* The importance of the doctrine of rewards and punishments is insisted on by Unitarians as well as by the orthodox. The question is, does their scheme, or ours, exhibit the doctrine in the form best adapted to impress men with a dread of sin, and excite them to obey the divine precepts? Now I think it must be obvious to those who are acquainted with the most respectable authors on both sides, that the heaven which we are taught by our system to contemplate, is a state of higher perfection, and of purer and more elevated enjoyment, than that which our opponents describe. Unitarian authors represent the future condition of Christians as being much less removed from their present condition, than what we suppose to be the fact. Accordingly they look upon us as overstepping the bounds of sober truth, and attempting to set off the joys of heaven with too high colors. Read what they have written on this subject, and you will be satisfied that the views they exhibit of the heavenly felicity are less adapted to excite a deep interest in the mind of man, and less adapted to sway his active powers, than those which are exhibited by the best writers on the other side. If this is in fact so, then, whatever may be said as to reason and argument in the case, the orthodox system has the advantage as to *moral influ-*

ence. For the contemplation of a future reward to be obtained by virtuous efforts, must evidently tend to excite those efforts, very much in proportion to the greatness and excellence of that reward.

I pass now to the consideration of *future punishment.* My first inquiry is, does the threat of punishment tend to deter men from sin ? Is the penalty of a law fitted to have an influence to prevent transgression ? If so, it must be by moving the passion of *fear.* The evil threatened is addressed to this passion, and can produce an effect upon no other principle of action. The next question is, whether the prospect of an evil that is great and insupportable, has a tendency to excite a *stronger* sensation of fear, than the prospect of an evil comparatively small and easily endured ? I appeal to common sense and common practice. When legislators find that the penalty of any law does not work upon the fears of men powerfully enough to prevent the commission of crimes, they increase its severity. And this they do upon the general principle, that the penalty of a law will be likely to awaken the fears of men and influence their conduct, other things being equal, very much in proportion to the greatness of the evil involved in that penalty. Upon this obvious principle, I wish you to examine the practical tendency of our doctrine respecting future punishment. We believe that the future punishment of the wicked will be *inexpressibly great* and will *endure forever.* We bring that great and endless punishment into view, in order to illustrate the evil of sin and the displeasure of God against it. We believe that such a punishment is just; that it is no more than commensurate with the ill desert of sin ; and that it shows no more displeasure against sin, than is prompted by the perfect love which the King Eternal feels for the welfare of his kingdom. Now will not any man be powerfully held back from the commission of sin by the serious apprehension that it is a great evil, that God is greatly displeased with it, that it tends to produce extensive injury to the creation, and that it will be followed with an inexpressible and hopeless misery ? If you would weaken the power which hinders a man from sin, weaken his apprehension of

the greatness of the evil of it; weaken his apprehension of the displeasure of God against it, and of the dreadfulness and the duration of the misery to which it will lead. Is not this what the system of Unitarians actually does, so far as it opposes the views of the orthodox respecting future punishment? I have nothing to say here as to the arguments used on one side or the other. I speak simply as to *practical tendency*. And I am not anxious what conclusions any man will adopt, who will allow himself, on rational principles, to investigate the two systems under consideration.

I might say, were it necessary, that the powerful influence of the doctrine of future punishment, as we hold it, is illustrated by numberless facts. Men strongly inclined or tempted to sin, have been deterred from the commission of it by the fear of endless punishment. By the same fear, many have been roused from spiritual lethargy, and excited to make that most important inquiry, "What shall we do to be saved?" How many have been excited by this doctrine to such reflections as these: — "Is that sin, which I indulge in my heart, so great an evil in the sight of a just and benevolent God, that he has threatened everlasting punishment as its recompense? Am I, while impenitent, exposed to that recompense? And shall I, by the momentary pleasures of sin, bring hopeless ruin upon my immortal soul?" Such reflections as these, naturally occasioned by the doctrine of endless punishment, have led, through the mercy of God, to the thorough reformation of numberless transgressors.

6. *Reverence for the word of God.* The grand maxim of the Polish Socinians was, that *reason is our ultimate rule and standard*, and that whatever in religion is not conformed to this is to be rejected. This maxim, as they understood it, gave them liberty to alter or set aside the obvious sense of the Bible, whenever it did not agree with the deductions of reason. Unitarians in general have, with more or less decision, adopted the same maxim. I do not say, that all who are called Unitarians treat the word of God with the same irreverent license, which some English Unitarians have shown. But no candid and competent judge can

doubt, that the *general aspect* of Unitarianism does less honor to revelation than the contrary system. Unitarianism bows with less veneration to the word of God, and receives its instructions with a less implicit confidence. It has lower views of the nature and degree of that inspiration which the writers of Scripture enjoyed, and is proportionably less inclined to receive their word as infallible. In forming our opinions, we inquire simply, *what saith the Scripture? and what was the sense which the inspired writers meant to convey?* When we learn this, we are satisfied. Our reason receives its doctrine from the word of God. It sees the objects of religion, not in its own light, but in a light borrowed from revelation. As soon as our reason discovers what God teaches, we suffer it to go no further. The Bible, we believe, contains a harmonious system of truth unmixed with error. If our reason seems to see inconsistencies, we charge not the appearance of those inconsistencies to any fault in the Scriptures, but to the weakness and obscurity of reason, and we have no doubt it will entirely vanish when our reason acquires higher improvement. I refer it to others to determine, whether Unitarianism teaches its disciples to treat the word of God with this kind of reverence and submission.

Our system gives us liberty to pass over no part of Scripture as unworthy of regard. What is said on one part of a subject we receive with as much confidence, as what is said on another part. I might show this to be our practice, with regard to the doctrine of the Trinity, the moral corruption of man, the divine purposes, and the divine agency. But, in my apprehension, the Unitarian theory is so constructed, as to set aside important parts of Scripture entirely. The faith of Unitarians, certainly of those who believe in the simple humanity of Christ, is the same as it would be, if those texts which ascribe the highest perfections to Christ were expunged from the Bible. There are texts which assert that the Word was God — that all things were made by him and for him — that he is over all, God blessed for ever. But these texts, and others of similar import, make no alteration in the faith of Socinians. Their opinions are founded on other representations

of Scripture *exclusively*. The orthodox have a belief in the inspiration and authority of the Bible, which prevents them from treating any part of it in this manner. If the Bible teaches that Christ is a man, they believe he is a man. If the Bible teaches that he is divine, they believe he is divine. If it teaches that he created all things, they believe it. If it teaches that he prayed to the Father, that he suffered, and died, and rose from the dead, they receive all this as a matter of fact. Whatever the Bible declares respecting Christ, they regard as infallible truth. They extend the limits of their faith far enough to comprise all parts of the testimony of God. They do not come to the Bible with such a bias of mind, that if they believe Christ to be *man*, they will believe this *only*, and whatever the Bible may say, will not believe that he is also *God;* or that, if they believe the divine *unity*, they will believe this *only*, and whatever the Bible may say, will not believe a divine Trinity. They have such liberality of faith, that, on the simple authority of God's word, they will believe both. I mention this, merely to show that their system, or their habit of thinking, leads them to entertain so profound a reverence for the Bible, that, as soon as they know what it declares, they are satisfied. They suffer not their reason to set itself up and claim authority, as their ultimate guide ; but require it to submit to the authority of Revelation, and to exercise itself only in receiving instruction from God, with the docility of a child. *The divine authority and infallible truth* of the Scriptures is the principle which controls their reasoning and their faith.

I could extend these remarks, and show that, on the subject of man's moral depravity, the atonement, regeneration, and other controverted points, the reasoning of Unitarians manifests less reverence for the word of God, than that of their opponents. I could illustrate this, as before, by the simple fact, that there are many passages of the Bible, which the writers seem to have thought very important, which yet are of no account with Unitarians, and have no influence upon their faith. It would be easy for Unitarians themselves, by a little inquiry, to perceive that their

faith would be just what it now is, were the texts referred to erased from the sacred pages.

I might cite many observations of English and German Unitarians, expressive of their low ideas of inspiration, and their want of reverence for the word of God. But I intended merely to direct the eye of the reader to what seems to me obvious, and lead him to inquire, whether the *general aspect* of the system embraced by Unitarians, and the general style of their reasoning on religious subjects, is not indicative of less reverence for the sacred oracles than what is manifested by the orthodox. But whether the result of a comparison be or be not the same in their minds as it is in mine, the uniform declarations and conduct of the orthodox, and the general character of their writings, can leave no man in doubt as to the reverence which they entertain for the word of God, or as to the tendency of their system of religion to promote such reverence.

7. Let us finally consider the subject in relation to *benevolent action*, particularly that highest kind of it which is directed to *the spread of the gospel and the salvation of men.*

The views, which our religious system exhibits of the eternal love of God, and especially of the condescension and grace of Jesus Christ, have a manifest tendency to beget the sincerest and most active kindness towards mankind. Under the influence of such examples of goodness, as we are taught to contemplate in the life of Jesus and his followers, we cannot be indifferent to the wants or the sufferings of our fellow creatures.

But the grand influence of orthodoxy relates directly to the spiritual and eternal condition of men. We believe — and it is a distinguishing mark of our religion — that the world lieth in wickedness; that all men are the subjects of a total alienation of heart from God, and justly exposed to everlasting punishment. This view of mankind, especially when we look upon ourselves as partners with them in the same guilt and ruin, must produce emotions of sympathy. And when, with a temper of mind which is in any measure what it ought to be, we consider their moral degradation and misery in connection with that grace of God

which has provided salvation; how deeply must we be affected, and how powerfully must we be stirred up to benevolent exertion in their behalf. Look abroad into various quarters of the world, where mankind are in a state of the profoundest ignorance and wretchedness, and see the efforts which are made for their reformation and their happiness. Then look into Christian nations, and see who are the most active in promoting these benevolent efforts. See what is the spring of all these remarkable movements, which really present the only prospect we have of the salvation of the world. What is it that rouses the exertions of those who are giving their substance, or offering their prayers, or exposing themselves to suffering and death, in the cause of human happiness? It is simply this. They see that the children of men have destroyed themselves; that their immortal souls are ready to perish. This touches the pity of their hearts, and kindles benevolent desire. They see that a Saviour is provided, and that self-ruined sinners may obtain eternal life. This awakens their hope, their zeal, and their efforts, and gives them alacrity and patience in their labors. If souls precious as their own, and equally the objects of the divine mercy, may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory, they have a reward like that which Jesus himself enjoys, when he sees the travail of his soul and is satisfied. I say, then, that the doctrine of the utter ruin of man, and of the grace of God which bringeth salvation, is the spring of those animated exertions for the good of the world which mark the present era.

To try the natural tendency of the doctrine of man's depravity, and his redemption by Christ, as we hold it, I will suppose the following case. There is a certain Unitarian, who, though a very benevolent man, yet, with his present views of religion, makes no exertions by the contribution of money or by personal labors for the conversion of sinners, either at home or abroad. He is content that men in Christian and in heathen lands should remain as they are, except what may be done for them by the gradual progress of knowledge, and the arts of civilized life. But this same Unitarian alters his religious opinions, and becomes well satisfied

that mankind are everywhere in that very state of moral corruption and ruin which the orthodox system asserts, and that just such a salvation is provided, and may be obtained in just such a way, as that system teaches. Of this he becomes deeply convinced. What will be the consequence? Will not his heart be touched with compassion for sinners? Will he not long to see the grace of God displayed in their conversion? Will he not join himself to the company of those who are laboring, and praying, and giving of their substance for the salvation of the perishing? Will not this be the natural consequence of such a change in his religious views? Do not facts, as well as the nature of the case, show it to be so?

Now invert the supposition. A man, who feelingly embraces the common orthodox system, and who is led by his views of the ruined, miserable condition of the human race, to unite with those who show the highest degree of zeal in promoting the conversion of sinners at home, and in sending the gospel to the heathen; — such a man changes his faith, and comes to entertain the views of Unitarians, respecting the state and the prospects of human beings. Is not his zeal for the conversion of sinners and for evangelizing the heathen extinguished? And does he not forsake the society of those who are active in promoting the benevolent enterprises of the present day? Do not facts show this to be the natural consequence of such a change in his opinions? Unitarians, as it seems to me, act with perfect self-consistency on this subject. Their opinions and their practice correspond; and with the sentiments they now indulge, respecting the nature of the gospel and the character and condition of man, what powerful motives can they have to labor or make sacrifices for the conversion of sinners? Have we any reason to expect that Unitarians will so far imitate the holy apostles, as to become preachers of the gospel among the heathen, and to be willing to spend and be spent, to suffer persecution and to die, in the cause of human salvation? Possibly they may be accessible to the influence of motives which we have not duly considered. If we are chargeable with a mistake or with ignorance on this subject, or if we

indulge views which can be considered as unjust or injurious, we must refer to the writings and the conduct of Unitarians as our apology. What exertions have they made to promote the spread of the gospel in pagan lands? What heathen tribes or nations are now receiving the words of eternal life from their missionaries, or experiencing, in other ways, the salutary effects of their religious charities and their prayers? For myself, I know not how it is that any, who have a heart to feel for the woes or to desire the eternal happiness of man, can be indifferent to the benevolent operations of this day in behalf of those who are destitute of the gospel. But are not Unitarians, generally, chargeable with this indifference? Are they not chargeable with more than indifference? Instead of uniting with the multitude of good men, who devote themselves to works of Christian benevolence, do they not look with pity or contempt upon the most fervent prayers and the most faithful and successful labors of the church of Christ, in the cause of human salvation? And is not this a dark and forbidding characteristic of their system?

I am aware it may be difficult for those, whose minds have strong prepossessions against orthodoxy, to conceive that it should produce such effects as I have ascribed to it. But certainly such effects do naturally result from it, as it is understood and embraced by the orthodox. Such must be my apprehension, till some one shall take the doctrines of orthodoxy, just as *we* hold them, not as represented by our opponents, and make out by fair reasoning that they have an opposite tendency.

I intended to proceed further under this general head, and to consider the tendency of our religious system, compared with the opposite one, to promote a spirit of humility and of prayer. But it will be perfectly easy for the reader to apply to each of these subjects the principles which have been applied to other subjects treated in this Letter.

I shall now finish what I have to say on the important subject of *practical influence*, by one remark; namely; that the advantage, which the author of the sermon has in setting forth the practical influence of Unitarianism, is derived almost entirely from

those views of religion which belong to the orthodox. These, generally, are the views, which he makes prominent in his discourse, and by which he gives plausibility to his system. The propriety of this mode of treating the subject, is left to the consideration of others. To those of my readers who understand thoroughly what the Unitarian scheme is, I must also refer the decision of another question; that is, whether this author has not, in some instances, been silent respecting certain opinions which are common among Unitarians, when the importance of those opinions, as well as the express design of his sermon, required him to speak of them without reserve. If, on every important topic, he has been perfectly explicit in giving *his own* views, it must be that he differs very widely in opinion from the generality of Unitarians. And if so, then I should doubt, whether some man who is of the same mind with them might not more properly be employed, as their agent and representative before the public. Though he may have given a true and unreserved account of his own religious faith, I cannot think he has given a just account of the general faith of those, for whom he undertakes to speak. Thus in my apprehension, he fails essentially as to both systems. As to orthodoxy, he does not show a feature of it in its true light. What he has written would enable no man on earth correctly to understand any one article of our faith. As to Unitarianism, — I think he has as really failed of giving a just and complete account of it, though not in the same way, nor in an equal degree.

Although I have spoken frequently of the injustice which the orthodox have been accustomed to suffer from their opposers, I would not have you imagine that I have meant to complain of any *personal* injuries, or wished to excite feelings of commiseration towards the orthodox. I have complained of injustice in the treatment which our religious faith has received from our opponents, because it tends to bar their minds and the minds of others against the most salutary truths, and to perpetuate the evils of controversy.

I am conscious of no disposition and of no temptation to re-

proach or injure those, whom I have here addressed. On the contrary, I have strong inducements to respect and honor them, especially those of them who were among my Instructors and fellow students at the University, and many others, to whom I have particular personal attachments. But I have wished to cherish the influence of still higher motives towards those from whose religious opinions I dissent. I would regard them as fellow creatures, whom God requires me to love as I love myself, — who are destined to the same immortal existence, and capable of the same immortal joys with myself, — who are to appear before the same high and holy tribunal, and whose final sentence is to come from the lips of the same infallible Judge. Under the influence of these considerations, I have found it easy not only to guard my mind against every feeling of animosity, but to exercise love and tenderness. In executing the business which I am now closing, I have charged myself to do as much as possible to promote the cause of Christ; and as little as possible to inflict a wound upon the feelings of my opponents. Indeed I have written with the desire and the hope of contributing something to their welfare. I have also endeavored to remember, that the feelings which are apt to agitate the minds of contending parties, will shortly vanish, and that the controversy which has made its way into New England, and the conduct of all those who take a part in it, must be subjected to review before him who cannot err.

And now, respected friends, I desire freely to inquire, what Unitarians expect to gain by the efforts they are making in their pamphlets, periodical publications and sermons, to disseminate the peculiarities of their religious system? Do they expect that Unitarianism will have a more powerful influence to promote good morals in society, or that it will produce better men, or better civil and literary institutions, than that religion which brought our forefathers to New England, and which has given to all our institutions, to our ministers and churches, to our rulers and our community at large, a character of preëminence which has been universally seen and acknowledged among us? As to this matter

of practical influence, our system most evidently possesses every thing which is valuable in that of Unitarians. Whatever motives to goodness can be drawn from the "paternal character of God," or from any of his moral attributes, from the "loveliness and sublimity of virtue," from the example of Christ, from the precepts of the gospel, or from the doctrine of a resurrection and a future state of retribution; our system inculcates them at least as forcibly and turns them to as good account as that of our opponents. And our system has much in addition which we consider of infinite worth, but of which theirs is wholly destitute. I ask then, what they expect to gain by the efforts they are making, — which are, in reality, efforts to diffuse among men lower conceptions of Christ, and of the honor due to him from his people, — lower conceptions of the disorder of the human mind, and of the evil of sin, — lower conceptions of the value of Christ's atonement, and of the necessity and worth of divine influence to renew men to holiness, — lower conceptions of the recompense which sinners deserve, and of the obligations of those who are pardoned to the grace of God? Let the thing be varnished over ever so artfully, this is the real tendency of their efforts. And what good to themselves or to others do they expect from such efforts? Why should they wish to promote a system, which lets down the standard of Christianity so as to meet half way at least, the wishes of the irreligious; — a system which does, in fact, find a place in the hearts of those who are living to the present world, without giving them any disquietude, and which is likely to be embraced by thousands in preference to the opposite, for the very reason, that it relieves them from being disturbed by the warnings of conscience, and allows them to live in the neglect of those things which are unseen and eternal; — a system which never can coalesce with the feelings of those whose hearts are warm with benevolence to the souls of men, and with zeal for their conversion; — a system which, if it should prevail, would prevent forever the pious efforts which our blessed Lord and Redeemer requires his followers to make, to convey the gospel of peace to the ends of the world? This general aspect of Unitarianism is portentous. It excites my fears.

And it is sufficient, by itself, to produce in my mind an honest and serious apprehension, that whatever plausible arguments may be used to give the system support and currency, it is indeed *another gospel.*

A

REPLY

TO

DR. WARE'S LETTERS

TO

TRINITARIANS AND CALVINISTS.

FIRST PUBLISHED A. D. 1821.

INTRODUCTION.

When I wrote the Letters to Unitarians, I meant to treat the subjects of the present controversy so explicitly, and to extend my remarks to such a length, that I might, in any case, have a full apology for declining a rejoinder. I then had and have still many and weighty reasons against being a party in any religious controversy. It is not the way in which I have generally supposed I could best labor for the promotion of the cause of Christ. The duties imposed upon me by my office are sufficiently extensive and important to occupy all my time, and sufficiently diversified to satisfy my love of variety; and they are so congenial to my inclinations, as to afford all the enjoyment which can be expected by any man, oppressed with the cares of public life, and the imperfections of human nature. But for my reluctance to engage in controversy, I have had another reason. In the regular course of my official duty, though I have much to do with controverted subjects, and though I never impose any restraints upon the freedom of discussion but those of decency, it has still cost me no effort to keep my mind free from agitation. But as to public religious controversy, I have seen that it has so often had an unhappy influence upon the dispositions of men; that it has so often occasioned the offensive boast of victory, or that which is no less offensive, the sullen mortification of defeat; that it has so often injured the beauty of men's characters, cooled the ardor of their piety, and detracted from their comfort, or at least from the comfort of their friends, that I have earnestly wished to avoid the danger. I have wished also, if possible, to avoid the sufferings of controversy; the unhappiness of being exposed to the charge of bigotry or party

spirit, of ambition or meanness, of arrogance or imbecility; the unhappiness of being reproached or despised by my opposers, or the greater unhappiness of feeling any disposition to reproach or despise them. Besides, I have thought that, so far as I was concerned, truth and piety might be more successfully promoted by more silent, gentle means. I have feared that an attempt even to advance the cause of pure religion in a controversial way, would kindle a fire which would endanger the most precious interests of the church, and which Christians, blessed with the largest portion of the spirit of Christ, might in vain try to extinguish.

These and other like considerations may seem trifling to men who cherish a disputatious spirit, who pant for the noise and strife of controversy, and who have never soberly considered the evils likely to result from it. But in my mind, such considerations as I have suggested are of no ordinary importance, and for a long time they produced in me a resolution against controversy, which I thought could never be overcome. But as it is, I must now go forward, hoping to derive benefit to myself from the kind and amiable temper of my opponent, and no less benefit to my cause, from the frankness with which he declares his opinions, and the zeal with which he attacks mine.

I do not come to this task with an expectation of producing, generally, any material change in the views of confirmed Unitarians. I should be a poor proficient in the science of the human mind, could I not foresee that my arguments will be likely to appear as inconclusive to them, as theirs do to me. My age and experience have somewhat cooled the ardor of feeling which might once have led me to indulge different expectations and to think that my opponents and all others might easily be convinced of the truth of my opinions. I have lived long enough to learn, that arguments have a different weight in the judgment of different men, and that something besides argument is concerned in controversy. In the present case, the facts which are admitted by the two parties as the foundations of their respective systems, are not the same; nor is the method of ascertaining what facts really exist, the same. Now it is very natural to suppose, that the habits

of thinking and feeling, which have led men to embrace the Unitarian views in regard to this controversy, will give them but a poor opinion of our arguments. If we were exactly in their case, we presume our judgment would be like theirs. Did not our own experience, did not a faithful comparison of our heart and life with the rule of duty convince us of the fact, that our own nature is the subject of an original, deep-rooted corruption; no external evidence could easily induce us to believe the fact in relation to others.

It may be asked then, what good I hope to accomplish by pursuing this controversy. One good object which I hope to accomplish is, to satisfy the serious friends of orthodoxy, that after all the attacks which have been made upon their religion, it rests on an immovable basis; that it has as much solid argument to support it as they have ever supposed. I hope also to convince those who, not being yet settled in their belief, are candidly inquiring *what is truth*, that the system of orthodoxy, at least in its principal features, so far corresponds with the word of God and with sound experience, and that its moral tendency is in so high a degree salutary, that they ought to make a serious pause before they reject it. And finally, I should be glad to do something towards convincing candid Unitarians of that, which has always been sufficiently evident, that those who embrace the scheme of orthodoxy, do not necessarily resign all claims to manly strength of understanding, nor show themselves enemies to freedom and fairness of investigation.

There are many passages of taking plausibility in Dr. Ware's Letters, against which a charge of incorrectness might easily be sustained, but which, as they relate to matters of small consequence in the controversy, I shall pass over with little or no attention. I say this to guard my readers against supposing, that my silence on any part of the Letters is to be interpreted as a sign of approbation. My purpose is to fix on the main points of the controversy, and to dwell upon those arguments on which all who will bring themselves to patient and thorough inquiry, must lay the greatest stress. If we can defend the general principles

which have governed our reasoning; if we can, by legitimate arguments, support the chief doctrines of our system, and vindicate them from the chief objections of opposers, the work is done. Let the strength of the foundation be made to appear, and we shall not doubt the building will stand. And as to the scheme which we feel it to be our duty to oppose, — if we can succeed in taking away its foundation, we shall deem it sufficient, without either making a violent attack upon the superstructure to hasten its fall, or standing by to exult in its ruins.

CHAPTER I.

To prepare the way for a useful investigation of the subject of human depravity, I shall present in one connected view the opinions which Dr. Ware has advanced in different parts of his third Letter.

"I insist," he says, "that the account usually given of human wickedness is exaggerated."—"Men are not the mere brutes and fiends it would make them. There is much good as well as evil in the human character;" (meaning the natural character.) "As much as there is of wickedness and vice, there is far more of virtue and goodness."—"If we take a fair and full view, we shall find that in by far the greatest part of human beings, the just, and kind, and benevolent dispositions prevail beyond measure over the opposite; and that even in the worst men, good feelings and principles are predominant, and they probably perform in the course of their lives many more good than bad actions; as the greatest liar does, by the constitution of his nature, doubtless speak many truths to every lie he utters."—"Man is by nature, or as he is born into the world, innocent and pure; free from all moral corruption, as well as destitute of all positive holiness; and

until he has formed a character either good or bad, an object of the divine complacency and favor." — "He is by nature no more inclined to vice than to virtue." — "In early life, we see no proofs of depravity, of malignity, of inclination to evil in preference to good." — "What I have stated I am persuaded is the general character, until the disposition and tendency of nature has been changed by education, example, and circumstances." — "I know not a single mark of early depravity common to children in general, which may not be fairly traced to causes which imply no degree of depravity, and no fault of character or disposition." — "No man, I am persuaded, was ever led by personal observation and experience to the thought of an original depravity of human nature." — "Young children," (he means in their natural state,) "are what men are to become by regeneration." — "Those now born into the world in Christian lands, are, as the Ephesians were after their conversion to Christianity, *saved by the grace of God, quickened, raised from the dead, made nigh by the blood of Christ, fellow-citizens with the saints, of the household of God.*" — "All this language was applied to the Ephesians universally after their conversion, and all of it is as applicable universally now to those who are Christians by birth, as distinguished from those who are heathen by birth."

The scheme more briefly is this. Man is born into the world free from corruption of nature, or propensity to evil. We see no proofs of depravity in childhood, no proofs of inclination to evil rather than good. All who are now born into the world in Christian lands are saints, saved by grace, as the converted Ephesians were. Every mark of depravity common to children may be traced to causes which imply no depravity at all. Even in the worst of men good feelings and principles are predominant.

It may be useless for me to stop here to express the astonishment that good men must generally feel, at such a description of the human character. For myself, while I have the Bible and my own heart and the world before my eyes, it is as impossible for me to admit the truth of the system above stated, as the truth of a

system of philosophy which denies the principle of gravitation; and for the same reason.

Dr. Ware says he is persuaded, that "no man was ever led by personal observation or experience to the thought of an original depravity of human nature." I have no doubt he has such a persuasion; but it is a little remarkable that he should have it, when by conversing either with authors, or with living Christians, he might so easily have discovered its contrariety to fact. Thousands and millions of enlightened Christians have declared, and multitudes of them in writing, that personal observation and experience have led them to believe in the moral depravation of man, or in his native propensity to evil. They have said it, when they have had no motive to say it but the strength of their own conviction. They have said it in their most solemn devotions; and they have said it most frequently and felt it most deeply, when *the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ has shone in their hearts* with the greatest clearness. And many writers have noticed the fact, that those who have most carefully studied human nature even among pagans, have acknowledged, and that in very strong terms, an inward depravation and corruption of man, rendering the mind averse to good and inclined it to evil.

In reflecting on this subject, I am led to inquire how it can be accounted for, that any man of sober judgment should entertain such views respecting the human character. Now so far as reasoning is concerned, I am satisfied, that the principal error in the scheme of Unitarians and Pelagians generally lies in this, that *they judge of man's character by a wrong standard.* This controversy respects man, not as an animal or merely intellectual being, nor as a member of domestic or civil society, but as a subject of God's moral government. Viewed in this light, he is required to conform to the *moral law.* This is the only rule of duty, the only standard of right feeling and right action. If we would know whether any subject of God's moral government is holy or sinful, or in what degree he is so, we must compare his moral character with the divine law. So far as he is conformed to that law, he is

holy. So far as he is not conformed, he is sinful. And as we are taught, that love to God and love to man is the sum of what the law requires; it is perfectly safe and often very convenient in our reasoning, to make use of this summary of the law as standing for the whole. This then being our rule of judgment, what will be our conclusion respecting the moral character exhibited by human beings in early life? Let the inquiry relate to the first character they exhibit *as moral agents;* so that we may not unnecessarily perplex the subject, at the outset, by looking after the moral affections or actions of men, before they are moral agents, or before the divine commands can be applied to them. Is it the general character of men, that as soon as the divine law is declared to them, they are disposed cordially to obey it? We must not so shape the inquiry, that it shall relate merely to exemption from sin. The real question is, whether holy love to God and man is the first moral affection which human beings generally exercise, after they become moral agents and are expressly informed what God requires of them. Keeping this point distinctly in view, let us now proceed to examine the reasoning by which Dr. Ware supports his opinion respecting the human character.

The reasoning of Dr. Ware on this subject is indeed plausible, being founded upon those natural qualities of the youthful mind, which are honored with the names of virtue, and universally regarded as amiable and useful. He says, "innocence, simplicity, and purity are the characteristics of early life." — "Veracity, kindness, good-will, flow from the natural feelings." — "How early does the infant discover affection, attachment, gratitude to those from whom it receives kindness." These are charming names, and I am sensible that charming qualities of human nature are denoted by them. And charming too are the complexion and features of a beautiful child, the sprightliness of its temper, and the activity of its limbs. But do any or all of these constitute *conformity to the moral law?* Do they render a child *holy?*

But Dr. Ware will probably say, he does not mention the lovely

qualities which are characteristic of early life, as a proof of *moral virtue* or *holiness*, because the infant child has not yet actually formed a character either good or bad, and so is neither holy nor unholy. But although this would have an appearance of consistency in one respect, it would, in another respect, involve the writer in a great inconsistency. For if this is his meaning, how is it possible to make his remarks, p. 26, apposite to his subject? His subject is man's *moral character*. He had just before been charging the orthodox with giving an exaggerated description of *human nature*, inasmuch as they do not take proper notice of what is "virtuous, and kind, and amiable, and good;" — words plainly denoting moral qualities. After thus distinctly bringing forward his subject, that is, human nature in respect to its moral qualities, he says, "our most correct ideas of human nature will be drawn from the characteristics of infancy, and the earliest indications of disposition, tendency, and *character* in the infant mind." Forgetting what he ventures to say in other places, that men by their natural birth receive no moral character, and have none, before they are born again, he here speaks of the indications of *character* in the infant mind.

Let us give this language a fair examination, and see whether any sense whatever that can be put upon it will make the writer who uses it consistent with himself. When he speaks of the indications of *character* in the infant mind, what character is meant? Is it the character which belongs to man, as a moral agent, or in relation to a moral law? Then it would seem the infant mind has such a character, and that character must be either good or bad, holy or unholy; which would be contrary to Dr. Ware's statements, p. 20, 41, and elsewhere. But if he does not mean the moral character of man, or his character as a moral agent; then his observations, p. 26, do not relate at all to the subject of controversy. For the only point at issue is, what is man's nature or character, as a moral agent, and in relation to a moral law? I ask then again, has the infant really a character in this respect? If so, that character must be either holy or unholy; and then what becomes of Dr. Ware's favorite position, that infants are

both free from moral corruption and destitute of holiness, and that they have no moral character either good or bad, before they are born again? On the other hand, if it is a fact, as he maintains, that infants have no moral character; then the characteristics of infancy which he enumerates, p. 26, can nowise relate to moral character, i. e. they can nowise relate to the subject under consideration; and so far as this subject is concerned, he might just as well mention a fair complexion or beautiful countenance, as "innocence, simplicity, and purity."

It may, however, be said, that "the characteristics of infancy, and the earliest indications of disposition, tendency, and *character* in the infant mind," though the infant mind does not yet possess a *moral* character, may still help us in some other way, to "*correct* ideas of human nature." Dr. Ware will not say that these characteristics of infancy prove the nature of man to be holy by proving that holiness really belongs to the infant's mind; for, as remarked before, this would be contrary to one of his main points. How then does his reasoning stand? Does he mean to say, that those things which are characteristics of human nature at a period when moral character does not exist, that is, that those properties of infancy which cannot be indications of any moral character *at the time*, are true indications of that moral character which subsequently exists? But this again would involve his reasoning in difficulty, because, according to his views, mankind after becoming moral agents, are not thus innocent, and pure, and free from inclination to sin.

But as I wish to do full justice to my opponent, and as far as possible to give to his words the very sense which he meant to express, I must say, that his language and his reasoning plainly imply, that human beings, at that period of infancy to which he refers, *do really possess a moral character*. He says, p. 26, "we draw our most correct ideas of *human nature* from the characteristics of *infancy*, and from the earliest indications of *disposition*, tendency, and *character* in the infant mind." Among these characteristics of infancy, he mentions "innocence, simplicity, and purity;" which he doubtless means we should understand to be

moral qualities. And a little below, after speaking of an infant as an object of interest to those about it, he asks, "Would it be so if it appeared to possess nothing good, and no tendency to good?" evidently implying that it does possess something good. In another place, he represents men as becoming "reasonable, *accountable* beings by their natural birth." If they are accountable beings, they are moral agents, and must have moral dispositions. He says too, still more plainly, p. 31, that young children have a "good disposition;" "that they are what men become by regeneration;" that they "are objects of the Saviour's complacency," and "proper objects of imitation." From these very plain, unequivocal declarations of Dr. Ware I cannot but infer what his real opinion is, namely, that by their natural birth men become moral, accountable beings, and have a moral disposition or character which is good; good or holy in such a sense, as to entitle them to the Saviour's complacency, and make them heirs of his kingdom. I am compelled to think this is the position he would maintain, though in several places he seems to slide away to another side of his system, and asserts that men by nature have no moral character, and are equally distant from holiness and from sin, and equally without any natural tendency to one or the other.

One more remark. If my position that men are by their birth *morally corrupt*, is thought to be absurd, on account of their being incapable at first of possessing any character, good or bad; the position of Dr. Ware is in this respect equally absurd. For if infants are capable of being "*pure*," they are capable of being *impure*. If they are capable of having a good disposition, or "tendency to good," they are capable of a bad disposition, or a tendency to evil. If they are capable of such a character as will render them "objects of divine complacency," they are equally capable of such a character as will render them objects of divine displeasure. It is Dr. Ware's opinion, p. 21, that a man is by nature as capable of vice as of virtue. I should hope therefore that neither he, nor any one who embraces his opinions, will again allege the *incapacity* of infants to be the subjects of moral corruption, as an objection against the doctrine of native depravity.

When I say that many declarations of Dr. Ware and the general current of his reasoning prove, that he believes man by nature the subject of real virtue or holiness, I would not willingly oblige myself to show, that he has nowhere written any thing contrary to this. For in commenting on John 3: 3, 6, he represents that "men receive by their natural birth only human nature; that they receive no moral character, but only the faculties and powers in the exercise of which a moral character is to be formed; and that the formation of a moral character," (he does not say whether good or bad,) introduces them into a new state of being, and may be called a new birth; and in p. 42, he seems to think the implication of the passage is, "that men do not possess by birth that character of personal holiness, which is necessary to their being Christians." It may be easier for Dr. Ware, than for me, to reconcile these representations with the passages to which I have before referred.

Let us now see by what particular arguments he supports the opinion, that men are by nature not only free from moral corruption, but inclined to virtue.

He first argues from *the innocence, simplicity, and purity of early life, and from the veracity, kindness, good-will, attachment and gratitude, which flow from the natural feelings of children.*

To guard against being imposed upon by names, let us here inquire what is that innocence, simplicity, purity, etc. which are in reality characteristic of the infant mind?

The word *innocence*, when applied to men in regard to moral character, signifies freedom from moral defilement or criminality. But when applied to other things, it commonly denotes that they are harmless, or free from a tendency to do hurt. In this sense a dove and a lamb are said to be innocent. If I mistake not, this is generally the meaning of the word when applied to infant children. It is in regard to this kind of innocence, that they are so often compared to lambs and doves.

Simplicity, when applied to rational beings, properly signifies artlessness, freedom from cunning or deceit. Infants and young children may have simplicity in this sense, merely because they

are incapable of subtlety or cunning, or because they have had no temptation to learn any deceitful arts.

In what sense Dr. Ware uses the word *purity* it is not easy for me to determine. If he uses it in that high moral sense, in which our Saviour uses it when he says, "blessed are the pure in heart," and so means to assert as a general truth, that moral purity is a characteristic of early life; I will not repeat what has already been suggested, as to the contrariety of this to other representations in his Letters; but will direct the reader's attention a moment to the shape which his reasoning assumes.

He undertakes to prove the truth of a disputed doctrine respecting human nature; i. e. that man is not the subject of innate corruption; and as a proof of this, he urges the purity which characterizes early life. Now if he uses the word *purity* as synonymous with *holiness*, he is chargeable with begging the question. But if he uses the word in an inferior sense, not including moral purity or holiness; then how can it prove that man is not morally depraved? But it may be he uses the word merely to denote freedom from particular forms of vice which show themselves in the world; or he may use it comparatively, and mean only that children are not yet tainted with those gross iniquities to which they are afterwards exposed. To either of these views of the subject we should fully agree.

And what are we to suppose Dr. Ware means by *the attachment*, *the kindness*, *the gratitude*, which show themselves in little children? Does he mean anything which has the nature of moral virtue or holiness? If so, his reasoning is faulty in the same way as before. But if he does not consider the attachment and gratitude, which are characteristics of infancy, and which, according to several passages in his Letters, precede the formation of any moral character, as having a moral nature; then I think he must regard them much in the same light, as he does those natural instincts, appetites and passions, the existence of which are not at all connected with moral character.

We see now how the argument stands, and are prepared to examine how forcible and conclusive it is. The above mentioned

characteristics of the infant mind are insisted upon as a proof, and a most important proof, that man is by nature free from moral depravity. I maintain, that they do not prove it.

I say, first, what several passages in Dr. Ware's Letters will bear me out in saying, that none of "the characteristics of infancy," none of those things which "flow from the natural feelings," can be of the nature of moral virtue, and so none of them can make known the moral disposition or character of the mind, as the fruit makes known the tree. Take the innocence, the attachment, the gratitude, and other obvious characteristics of little children just as they are. What do they prove, as to moral character? Nothing. They neither prove the existence of holiness, nor freedom from sin. As evidence of this, look at the numberless instances, in which characteristics of the same nature, and often higher in degree, are found actually to exist in those who live in the violation of the first and great command. Do we not often find youth, especially in well educated families, possessed of all those amiable qualities which Dr. Ware mentions as proofs of freedom from moral evil? Do we not see a sweetness and tenderness of disposition, which keep them at the greatest distance from doing anything to injure a fellow creature? And do we not see too either a power of conscience, or a delicate sense of what is decent and honorable, which leads them to abhor every open vice? This is called *innocence.* But is not innocence of this sort often associated with forgetfulness of God, and the neglect of all the peculiar duties of religion? Let multitudes, blooming in all the attractive loveliness of youthful innocence, measure their moral affections and character by that holy law, in which God asserts his rightful claims, and requires them to love him with all the heart, and to worship him in spirit and in truth; and will they not find themselves guilty before God, and be compelled to say, as the Apostle did, "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died?" In the instances of this kind which constantly occur, we see that what is called *youthful innocence* actually consists with that alienation of heart from God, which is treated in the Scripture as the

greatest of sins, and as the sum of all moral evil. How then can Dr. Ware make it an evidence of freedom from moral evil? If it may consist with moral evil in youth, why not in childhood? But the argument is stronger than this. If what is called innocence actually consists with a high degree of moral evil in youth; much more may it consist with a smaller degree of the same in early childhood.

I reason in the same way respecting the other characteristics of early life, mentioned by Dr. Ware. How does the "simplicity" or artlessness of children prove that they are not morally corrupt? They may be simple, unsuspicious, and artless, because they have had no opportunities or temptations to become otherwise. They may have what is sometimes denominated *purity;* that is, they may be free from the contamination of those vices which are stamped with a visible and disgraceful grossness, because they have not been exposed to that contamination, or because a regard to reputation, or the power of conscience, has been a salutary restraint; and yet divine truth may decide, that "they have not the love of God in their hearts." Nor is *that disposition to speak the truth,* which appears in children, any proof that they are free from depravity. They may speak the truth, because it is the way to obtain the gratification of their desires. When they are hungry, they may speak the truth and say, we are hungry, because it is the way to get food. Whatever may be their wants, they may speak the truth, and tell their friends what their wants are, because this is the way to get a supply. We well know that honesty is the best policy; and children may begin to learn this while very young. But does speaking the truth, from any such principle, prove that they are not depraved? Dr. Ware supplies us with a very satisfactory answer: "The greatest liar," he says, "does by the constitution of his nature, doubtless speak many truths to every lie he utters." He is *the greatest liar;* and this surely is saying that he is the subject of no ordinary degree of depravity. But in perfect consistency with all this depravity, he finds motives to speak *many truths* to one lie. Since then there are so many motives to speak

the truth in those who are morally depraved, and since a prevailing habit of speaking the truth does, in the case mentioned by Dr. Ware, consist with that shocking degree of depravity which is found in the *greatest liar;* it is perfectly plain, that merely speaking the truth can never prove either men or children to be free from depravity.

"How early," says Dr. Ware, "does the infant discover affection, attachment, and gratitude to those from whom it receives kindness!" If, as he thinks, this is an evidence of freedom from sin in children, why not in men? But on this point, he who knew what was in man guards us against mistake. "If ye love them who love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?"

The amiable characteristics of early life are made so important a topic of argument by Dr. Ware, that it may be proper to follow him a little further. What he says, p. 28, as to the original freedom of children from cruelty, their tenderness, compassion, etc., is, I doubt not, generally correct. I allow that children do not naturally take pleasure in giving pain to insects, or any other sensitive beings, and that, when they do mischief, it is not generally from the love of mischief, as the real motive, but from the love of action and excitement, or some other similar cause. But what does this prove, as to the existence of depravity? Men, as well as children, and men who live without God, and who exhibit a character at the utmost distance from holiness, may still have no disposition to cruelty, but may be tender, sympathetic, pitiful. But can this prove that they are free from moral depravity? No more than speaking the truth can prove "the greatest liar" free from depravity.

In regard to all the particulars above noticed, the plain truth is, that in order to qualify human beings for the state in which they are destined to live, and for the relations they are to sustain, God has given them a variety of natural appetites and affections, which, though capable of being made auxiliaries to virtue, and conducive to the ends of benevolence, have not in themselves anything of the nature of holiness, but are perfectly distinct from it,

and may be cultivated to a high degree in those in whom moral principle is prostrated. The infidel may have them all; and so may the man who idolizes the world; and so may the profane swearer, the duellist, and the ambitious conqueror. This is the case with all the lovely characteristics of early life, which Dr. Ware makes so prominent in his delineation of human nature. Be it so that human beings in early life, and in many instances afterwards, do possess all the sweetness of the natural affections. It does not follow from this, that either children or men are free from moral depravity. The natural affections, which in a considerable degree show themselves even in irrational animals, are indeed not only blameless, but amiable and useful; and forever to be admired is the wisdom and the goodness of God, who has endued us with them. And any one who should assert these natural affections to be any part of human depravity, or any indication of a depraved nature, would mistake as grossly as if he should assert a man's senses or limbs to be a part of depravity. But no less obvious is the mistake of the man, who considers them as a proof of freedom from depravity. They prove neither the one nor the other. Their existence and operation, simply considered, are never made the subject of divine legislation; though the divine law directs how they are to be used, and to what ends they are to be made subservient. It is only in this last view that they assume a moral aspect.

The conclusion, to which I wish to conduct my readers on this subject, results directly from a matter of fact with which we are familiarly acquainted. We know, by experience and observation, that the natural affections, sympathies, and instincts of man exist and are active in those who are morally depraved. And although Scripture and observation unite in teaching, that there are some forms or degrees of moral evil which generally destroy natural affection, it is obvious that other forms and degrees of it do not. From the actual appearances of human nature, no one could ever suppose, that the amiable qualities which have been mentioned as belonging to men, whether old or young, have any necessary connection with moral character. And certainly no one can

suppose this, who makes the divine law the standard of moral character. What is called natural affection, neither constitutes that which the law requires, nor shows the absence of that which it forbids.

I have dwelt so long upon this particular point, because it is of great consequence, and because it is one which has occasioned and is still likely to occasion a variety of mistakes, both theoretic and practical.

Dr. Ware remarks, p. 27, that children are generally simple and unsuspicious, "until the disposition and tendency of nature has been *changed* by education, example, and circumstances." Now I very much doubt whether the possession of a character opposite to the simplicity and unsuspiciousness of children, implies any essential "change in the disposition or tendency of nature." It is easy enough to account for it, that a child or youth who is now simple and unsuspicious, because he has not been versed in the subtle and imposing arts of life, and has never been in circumstances which have tempted him to learn those arts, and so has never had the latent properties of his own nature brought into action, should afterwards become artful and false in his practices, and suspicious in his temper, without any radical change. The natural faculties and dispositions of the mind admit of an endless variety of modifications. Difference of animal temperament and of external circumstances may originate innumerable differences in men's visible conduct, and in the aspect of their character, while their intellectual faculties and moral dispositions are substantially alike.

Secondly. Dr. Ware attempts to prove his doctrine respecting human nature, by the following argument, p. 26: "How universally is the infant an object of interest to those about it! Would it be so, if it manifested such tokens as the orthodox doctrine of depravity supposes, of a disposition and tendency wholly directed to evil, and appeared to possess nothing good and no tendency to good?"

In replying to this reasoning, I would refer to the representations which Dr. Ware has repeatedly made of the state of infancy.

He says, that men at first are not the subjects of either moral good or evil, and have no disposition to the one more than the other. And he asserts the same thing in a different form, when he says, p. 41, "that men by their natural birth receive no moral character, and have none before they are born again." Now take children in the state in which Dr. Ware here represents them to be, i. e. before they have any moral character, or any inclination to good or evil. According to this representation, they really "appear to possess nothing good, and no tendency to good;" of course, if Dr. Ware reasons correctly, they cannot be "the objects of interest to those about them."

But although this conclusion seems to our author to follow from his remarks, taken together; I am by no means convinced of its correctness. Is there nothing in children, viewed as subjects of depravity, which can render them objects of interest to those about them? Does it excite no interest in us, to look upon those who are possessed of so many faculties and so many engaging characteristics, which may render them amiable and useful in human society? But there is a subject of higher interest still, which Dr. Ware, at the time of writing p. 26, seems to have overlooked. Little children, though morally corrupt, have immortal souls, and are capable of endless happiness or misery. And besides this, they are placed under a dispensation of mercy, and may become children of God and heirs of his kingdom, "to the praise of the glory of his grace." Are not these faculties, these circumstances, and these prospects, sufficient to render children interesting objects? Nay, does not the very fact, that they are subjects of moral corruption and exposed to a state of irrecoverable ruin, render them objects of a still deeper interest? Were not the unbelieving Jews and the idolatrous gentiles interesting objects to the apostles? Is it not the very corruption, guilt, and wretchedness of unconverted sinners, that excite such compassion towards them in the hearts of Christians? And how was it with our Saviour? Did he not feel a most sincere, lively interest in those who were lost, and because they were lost? And have not men, dead in trespasses and sins, been objects of special interest to their merciful Creator?

Thirdly. Another argument of Dr. Ware in support of his theory is thus stated: "The doctrine of depravity is repulsive. The mind naturally revolts at it. It *seems* at first, to all men universally, to be inconsistent with the divine perfection. But the first impression is made upon us by the nature which God has given us; and I think we should be slow to believe that a nature, thus given to all, is intended to mislead and actually does mislead all, on so important a subject." p. 22.

Here let it be remembered, that the very question in controversy between the parties is, whether the first moral feelings of man are *right*. The argument of Dr. Ware, just stated, assumes that they *are* right, and so is another instance of taking for granted the point in debate. Admit the doctrine of depravity to be true, and the fact of its being repulsive to the natural feelings of men is easily accounted for from the depravity itself. It is, surely, no uncommon thing for the feelings of wicked men to revolt at a faithful representation of the vileness of their character and the greatness of their ill desert. Those feelings which render the doctrine of man's sinfulness repulsive, are, in our view, a part of his sinfulness. If he has a spirit of pride and self-complacency; a doctrine which tends to humble pride, and to oppose the spirit of self-complacency, will of course be repulsive. But this is not a solitary case. The feelings of man revolt at the strict and holy demands of the law. They equally revolt at the requisitions of the gospel. The feelings of a very amiable youth revolted at the command of Christ, to "sell all that he had and give to the poor." Was the fault in the command, or in his feelings? Does not the New Testament account for that disgust and opposition of man which the Christian religion has to encounter, by the fact that man is sinful? And does not the self-righteous, self-exalting spirit which lurks in man's heart, manifestly tend to give a repulsiveness to any doctrine, which shows his character despoiled of its moral beauty, degraded and disgraced, and the object of God's disapprobation? How can we for a moment think, that man's natural feelings are a proper test of what is true, and of what is consistent with the perfections of God, when

the Bible constantly directs us to a test, so exceedingly different? Let man be just what he is in his natural, unrenewed state, and it becomes an inseparable attribute of the religion of the cross, that it is *offensive*.

The circumstance, that "the scheme of total moral depravity, or of any original bias to evil rather than good, is something different from what we should expect, and involves difficulty," is indeed, as Dr. Ware says, "a reason for yielding our assent with caution, and not without very satisfactory evidence." In this light we have viewed it, and we have regulated our belief accordingly. The repulsiveness of the doctrine of depravity, and the natural reluctance to receive it, which we have felt as strongly as others, would not have been overcome "without very satisfactory evidence."

Fourthly. Another argument which Dr. Ware uses in support of his scheme, is derived from "a general view of the commands, precepts, exhortations, promises, and threatenings of religion, and from the whole history of the divine dispensations to men." p. 29.

We begin with the first three. What, then, do the divine commands, precepts, and exhortations show? They show what mankind *ought to be*, not what they *are*. Can Dr. Ware really think, what his argument seems to imply, that God's requiring men to be holy proves that they are holy? His commands undoubtedly presuppose that those to whom they are given are moral agents; of course, that they possess all the properties which are necessary to constitute them proper subjects of law. But is freedom from moral corruption essential to moral agency? If so, then as soon as men become sinners, they cease to be moral agents. And if they cease to be moral agents, they can be under no moral obligation. How then can God with propriety require them to obey his law? And what shall we say to those commands and exhortations of the Bible, which require men to be converted, to repent, to wash themselves from sin? As it is evident from the nature of these commands and exhortations, that they cannot be enjoined upon any but sinners, and as Dr. Ware's argument implies that

sinners cannot properly receive them; it would seem that they ought to be blotted out. But if freedom from sin is not essential to moral agency — in other words, if everything essential to moral agency is found in those who are depraved — and if nothing but what is essential to moral agency is required in order that divine commands may be given to men, then God's giving such commands proves nothing, one way or the other, as to the existence of moral corruption. This, I think, is a sufficient answer to the argument of Dr. Ware, now under consideration, and to much of the reasoning of Whitby and Taylor on the same subject.

Should any one here introduce the distinction which Dr. Ware makes in another place, between men's being sinners and their *making themselves sinners;* between the character born with them and that which is acquired; I should endeavor to make it appear that the distinction has no concern with this subject. Sin is always of the same nature; and at whatever time and in whatever instances it exists, it neither destroys nor weakens the obligation of the divine commands. And this is the same as saying, that divine commands may be given to man, and may be obligatory upon him, notwithstanding his native depravity. And if so, then their being actually given cannot afford any argument against *native* depravity. If sin exists in any moral agent, it must have had a beginning. But whether it began at one time or another, is not a circumstance which affects its nature. Suppose it began to exist at a period after the commencement of moral agency; it must have consisted radically in a wrong disposition or affection of heart. If an outward act is sinful, it is sinful because it is the expression or effect of that wrong disposition. Suppose now that moral evil began to exist at the very commencement of moral agency; still it must have consisted precisely in the same thing, that is, in a sinful affection or disposition. In this respect there is no difference. Do you say that, in the last case, the supposed disposition or affection could not have been really sinful, because there was no preceding exercise of moral agency which could be its cause? I answer, the same is true, in case moral evil is supposed to begin at any subsequent period. It is perfectly clear,

that the *first* sinful affection or disposition cannot be consequent upon any preceding act of moral agency as its proper cause, unless a right act can be the cause of a wrong one; or unless there can be a sinful act *before the first* sinful act, and that sinful act which is before the first be the cause of the first. But it surely needs no proof, that all the exercises of moral agency, which precede the first existence of moral evil, must be right. Whether, therefore, the *beginning* of sinful affection is coeval with the beginning of moral agency or not, it cannot be derived from any *faulty* exercise of moral agency which preceded. So that if men's *making themselves sinners* means that they first become sinners by an act or exercise of theirs which precedes their being sinful, and which, of course, cannot be itself sinful, it would come to this, that the first *existence of sin* in man is derived from a *sinless exercise as its cause.*

But if by men's making themselves sinners, or becoming sinners, Dr. Ware only means that, when they begin to sin, they exercise their intellectual and moral powers free from coercion, or that the particular sins they commit are voluntary, and that their sinful affections are, in the most proper and perfect sense, *their own;* then I say, this is all true of those who begin to be sinners when they first begin to be moral agents. The supposition, then, of sin's commencing so early, is no more inconsistent with the commands of God, than the supposition of its commencing subsequently.

The distinction above referred to, between what is native or original in moral agents and what is acquired, is one with which an unbiassed conscience is not likely to give itself any concern. Sure I am, that the divine law has nothing to do with it. The law requires moral agents to love God and man, that is, to be holy. If they are destitute of the holy affection required, whether at the commencement of their moral agency or afterwards, the law regards them as transgressors. Conscience regards them in the same light. If I look into my heart, and find that I have had a disposition or affection contrary to what the law requires, my conscience condemns me. If I have had that sinful

disposition for a long time, I feel myself to be so much the more criminal. And if I began to exercise that disposition as soon as I began to be a moral agent, and have exercised it ever since, I must be regarded as criminal in a very high degree. Present before a court of justice and before the world a man, who has always shown a lying, malicious, thievish disposition, from the time when he was first capable of showing any disposition; would he not be regarded with deep abhorrence, and sentenced with unsparing severity? It is evident, then, that common sense, not trammelled by false reasoning, unites with the word of God in condemning sinful affection, whatever may be the date of its origin. Whether it is the first affection of moral agents, or has its commencement afterwards, it is equally their own. In either case, they are free and unconstrained in exercising it, and possess everything necessary to render them proper subjects of law, and capable of obedience.

This is a subject on which most writers of the Arminian school have, in my apprehension, fallen into a variety of palpable mistakes. And their mistakes, so far as I am able to judge, have arisen from a wrong notion of moral agency; and their wrong notion of moral agency, from their not attending with sufficient care to the properties which the mind actually exhibits, and the laws according to which its operations are and always must be regulated.

Dr. Ware argues against the doctrine of native depravity, from "the promises and threatenings of religion." But what do these prove? If God promises eternal life to those who obey the law, or to those who repent and believe the gospel, and threatens destruction to those who do not; does this prove that men are by nature free from moral depravity? Are not such promises and threats just and proper, in relation to those who are naturally depraved? If not, it must be because natural depravity destroys moral agency. But we have seen above, that if depravity, beginning at any time, is consistent with moral agency, it is so if it begins when moral agency begins. And if depravity, beginning so early, may be consistent with moral agency; why may

it not be consistent with "the promises and threatenings of religion?"

The last particular to be noticed under this head is, "the whole history of divine dispensations to men." This, our author thinks, is an argument against the orthodox doctrine of depravity. I presume he means the history of God's goodness. The argument then would be, that God could not be supposed to show such kindness to men, if they were naturally depraved. But this argument is at once confuted by the representations of Scripture. "God maketh his sun to rise on the *evil* and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the *unjust*." Christ represents this as a prominent feature of the divine administration. God is a kind Father, a Being of infinite grace, and bestows favors which are wholly undeserved. Plainly, then, the divine dispensations in the present state, how kind and beneficial soever they may be, cannot be urged as a proof that men are "naturally innocent and pure."

Fifthly. Dr. Ware alludes "to a great number of particulars," mentioned in the Scriptures, "each of which separately," as he thinks, "seems to imply that mankind come into the world innocent and pure, the objects of the complacency of their Creator." p. 30. He instances only in one, but that one alone is, in his opinion, decisive of the question. He refers to the manner in which little children are spoken of by our Saviour, and by the Apostle. Matt. 19: 14, "Suffer little children to come unto me — for of such is the kingdom of heaven." "These," he says, "seem to have been infants, or at least very small children." And he adds, "There is not the slightest intimation, that these children had become the subjects of any great moral change." Then comes his conclusion. "But if they were depraved, destitute of holiness, etc., could our Saviour declare respecting them, 'of such is the kingdom of God?'"

It will doubtless occur to Dr. Ware, on a review of his Letters, that there is an appearance of inconsistency between this passage and some others. He tells us here, that infants, or very small children, belong to the kingdom of God, without "becoming the

subjects of any great moral change;" and just below it is implied in his reasoning, that they are not "destitute of holiness." But in p. 20, he describes man in infancy as "destitute of all positive holiness." And p. 41, 42, he represents men by nature as "wanting that personal holiness which is necessary to their becoming members of the kingdom of God," and as needing "a great moral change — in order to their being fit members of that kingdom." Here, infants are destitute of personal holiness, and cannot belong to the kingdom of God without a great moral change; but there, they belong to the kingdom of God as they come into the world, without that moral change.

Let us now return to the reasoning of Dr. Ware from Matt. 19: 14. The question, which contains the point of his argument, is this: "If the children who were brought to our Saviour were depraved, how could he declare respecting them, of such is the kingdom of God?" I answer, the kingdom of God consists, and will forever consist, of those who have been sinners. All the members of that kingdom will unite in the song; "Unto him who loved us and washed us *from our sins* in his own blood — be glory and dominion forever." So that their belonging, and being destined to belong to Christ's kingdom, proves nothing as to their native character, except that it was such as to need spiritual washing, or a "great moral change." It is a complaint of the Pharisees, that Christ receives sinners; and he declares it to be the great purpose of his coming into the world to seek and to save that which was lost; to call sinners to repentance, and gather them into his kingdom. He is a Saviour from sin. We have no intimation of his being a Saviour of any except sinners. His whole office as a Saviour, relates to sinners, — to sinners exclusively. How then does the fact that any persons, whether old or young, belong to his kingdom, prove that they are not by nature depraved, or that they are without sin? Christ gave it as a reason why little children should come or be brought to him, that they belonged or would belong to his kingdom. Now this reason was certainly as strong, if they were depraved and sinful, as if they were innocent and pure. Their being sinful placed them upon the

same general footing with all others, who are invited to come to Christ as a Saviour. If because they belonged to the kingdom of God, we conclude their nature was free from the pollution of sin, we must make the same conclusion respecting the nature of others who belong to that kingdom.

I have, I think with good reason, considered the passage to signify, that the children themselves belonged to the kingdom of God. But Rosenmüller and some others understand it as teaching, that the members of Christ's kingdom must be *like* little children, and so put it in the same class with the other texts, quoted by Dr. Ware; Mark 10: 14. 1 Cor. 14: 20. "Unless ye be converted and become *as little children*, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God." "In malice be ye children." We will now look at the passage with this signification.

We well know it to have been the practice of the prophets and apostles, and especially of Christ, to make use of those objects with which they were familiar, and often those which were present, to illustrate the divine perfections, the character and duty of men, and the general truths of religion; which is only saying, that in their religious instructions they used familiar metaphors, similes, and comparisons. And it is an acknowledged principle of figurative language, that the object from which a metaphor or simile is drawn, may not, in its own nature or principal attributes, truly and exactly resemble that which is meant to be illustrated by it. The resemblance may respect any one of the properties or circumstances of that object, without the least reference to others. In the texts above quoted, Christians are likened to little children. But can we infer from this, that children possess any moral excellence or goodness, like that excellence or goodness of Christians which is meant to be set forth by the comparison? Christians are also likened to sheep, lambs, doves. But do sheep, lambs, and doves possess moral excellence? Suppose I should say, that the texts, which represent Christians as being like sheep, lambs, and doves, "most clearly imply, until turned from their obvious meaning," that those animals "are objects of the Saviour's complacency and affection," and are "what men become by regenera-

tion." Would not this argument be as conclusive as Dr. Ware's? If he can infer the moral purity of little children from the circumstance that Christians are compared to them, I can infer the moral purity of lambs and doves from the same circumstance. To make this subject still clearer, look at the texts which represent the disciples of Christ as salt, light, and the branches of a vine. Do these texts imply that salt, light, or the branches of a vine, have any moral qualities like those, which these metaphors represent as belonging to Christ's disciples? Look at another case. Christ directs his apostles to be not only harmless as doves, but *wise as serpents*. Does the direction imply that serpents have any moral or intellectual qualities, like what he would see in his disciples? Even the *wisdom* of the serpent, — what is it but a mischievous subtlety, which we regard with abhorrence and dread, and which, in its nature and effects, is most unlike the wisdom from above? But there is a stronger case. Christ described to his disciples the conduct of an unjust steward who, from regard to his own interest, altered his master's accounts, and wickedly released his debtors from part of their obligations. This conduct of the steward Christ held up as a proper object of imitation; that is, he represented the conduct which his disciples ought to pursue, as being like the conduct of a steward chargeable with unjust and fraudulent practices. If it were necessary to go any further, I could recite the passage, in which God is likened to an unjust judge, who, though destitute of humanity, was influenced by the wearisome importunity of a poor widow to grant her the assistance she craved.

Now what is the natural conclusion from these, and other instances of metaphors, similes, and comparisons, but this; that in illustrating the truths of religion, the inspired writers lay hold on any object in the physical, animal, civil, or intellectual world, or anything else, which is suited to the purpose of illustration; that the particular object from which a metaphor is taken, may not, in its nature or principal attributes, resemble that which is to be illustrated by it; and that it is sufficient, if there is any one apparent attribute or circumstance, which may serve as a foundation

for the metaphor, though all the other attributes of the object are such, that they must be set aside as incompatible with the design of the metaphor. The properties or circumstances of any *natural* object may be made use of to illustrate things of a *moral* nature. For example; wicked men are represented in Scripture as being like barren trees, dogs, swine, and serpents. Now from the nature of the discourse, common sense always determines what is the particular property or circumstance, which is the ground of the comparison; as in the instances just mentioned, we easily perceive what it is in barren trees, in dogs, swine, and serpents, which is suited to illustrate the character of wicked men. Who ever supposed that, because these figures imply a likeness of some sort between wicked men and the things by which they are represented, therefore those things have a moral nature like the moral nature of Christians? There is indeed something in barren trees, dogs, swine, and serpents, which aptly sets forth the character of the wicked; and this is all that is meant by the figures. So in the case above mentioned, in which Christians are likened to sheep and doves. The mildness and harmlessness of those animals aptly illustrate those properties in Christians, which are expressed by the same names; though the former are merely natural or animal properties, the latter, moral or spiritual. The same remarks apply to those texts which represent Christians under the similitude of salt, light, and the branches of a vine. There is something in the useful qualities of salt and light, to which the useful character or influence of Christains may fitly be compared; and there is something in the dependence of the branches upon the vine, which fitly represents the dependence of Christians upon their Saviour. Nor is the illustration in these cases any the less striking or just, because salt, light, and the branches of a vine, have only a physical nature, while the Christian character which is likened to them, is moral or spiritual. Once more. Christians are represented as pilgrims, soldiers, and conquerors. But did any man ever interpret these figures as implying, that pilgrims, soldiers, and conquerors are free from moral evil, and resemble Christians in moral purity? These last instances show that there may be something

even in depraved human beings, on account of which Christians may be likened to them.

Now if such is the principle which must govern us in the interpretation of all figurative language, how utterly void of force is the favorite argument of Dr. Ware from the texts above recited. Because it is said that, in order to be Christians and enter into the kingdom of heaven, we must become *as little children*, he argues that children have a moral virtue or goodness of the same nature with the holiness of Christians. Suppose now that our Saviour had taken a *lamb*, instead of a child, and had set the harmless creature in the midst of his disciples, and told them they must become like that lamb; would it have implied that the lamb had moral goodness, and was "what men become by regeneration?" The plain truth is, that the amiable *natural* qualities which distinguish little children, and which, as we have seen, are perfectly consistent with the existence of depravity, are made use of to illustrate the amiable *moral* qualities which ought to belong to Christians. The text 1 Cor. 19: 20, is to receive the same construction. Christians are exhorted to show in their conduct a harmlessness and kindness like that which is characteristic of children. The natural qualities of children are made to represent the moral virtues of Christians; precisely on the same principle, that the kind and tender care which the hen extends towards her young, is made to illustrate the tender mercy of Christ towards sinners.

We have now attended to the chief arguments which Dr. Ware has offered as the support of his theory of human nature. The reader, after a thorough examination, will judge whether they are conclusive.

CHAPTER II.

In the foregoing chapter, I have made it appear, as I think, that those amiable qualities which are really characteristic of early life, and which Dr. Ware has mentioned as indications of moral purity, are in fact of such a nature, that they may consist and in subsequent life often do consist with depravity, and so cannot afford any argument at all against the common orthodox doctrine.

But why does Dr. Ware, in his attempt to show what human nature is, confine his attention to a part of those things which are characteristics of early life? How can he think it just to dwell upon those things only which are amiable and attractive, while he gives no weight to those of a contrary character? Why especially does he make such an effort to explain all the appearances of folly and corruption in the youthful mind in such a manner, as to give no support to the common doctrine of the Christian church? Does he find in this no evidence of being warped by a favorite theory? He is "persuaded," as has been noticed before, "that no man was ever led by personal observation and experience to the thought of an original corruption of human nature." But how happens it that he has this persuasion, when the well known fact is, that sober, thinking men through the Christian world have generally been led by observation and experience, not only to *think* of an original depravity, but to *believe it?* I shall here give the testimony of a man, who had no tinge of melancholy or superstition, and who was as little inclined to judge severely or uncandidly on this subject as any man living. "I have been employed," he says, "in the education of children and youth more than thirty years, and have watched their conduct with no small attention and anxiety. Yet among the thousands of children committed to my care, I cannot say with truth that I have seen *one* whose native character I had any reason to believe to be virtuous, or whom I

could conscientiously pronounce to be free from the evil attributes mentioned above;" that is, disobedience, revenge, selfishness, etc.* But I do not give this as the opinion of a single man. I hesitate not to say, that it has been the opinion of a great majority of enlightened Christians in all ages and countries. And might not Dr. Ware have found various passages of Scripture which announce the very truth I contend for? Might he not have found a man of no less observation and judgment than Solomon, declaring it as a general truth, that "foolishness is bound in the heart of a child?" Might he not have found that David's experience led him to the thought of an original, native depravity, when he made it a part of his humble confession before God, "Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me?" Might he not have found that Job's observation or experience led him to the thought of an original depravity, when he said, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" and, "How can he be clean that is born of a woman?" And might he not have found God himself declaring directly in his own name, that "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth?"

I have the unhappiness to differ entirely from Dr. Ware on this point, and am persuaded that no man, who is careful to make the law of God his rule of judgment, can avoid the conclusion above expressed. For just consider what are the real characteristics of childhood and youth, in relation to that law. I ask not now what are those amiable affections or instincts, which belong to domestic and social relations; but what are the *moral* characteristics of children;—not what we should *suppose* they must be from the views we have entertained of God; but what they are in fact. What are the real feelings and actions of children in regard to God's holy law? Begin the examination of childhood at an early period. Begin at the period when moral agency begins; and suppose moral agency begins earlier or later, as you please; and inquire for the disposition which children manifest, in respect to the divine commands. Do they show a heart to love God su-

* Dr. Dwight's Theology, Vol. 2, p. 26.

premely, when they are two or three years old? Is it said, they are not generally capable at that age of having any correct knowledge of God, or of their duty, and so are not capable of loving him? Take then a later period. Follow them to the age of four or five years, to six, or ten, till they have been instructed in religion, and are capable of loving and worshipping God. Do they generally show a disposition to love and worship God then? When they first begin, by visible conduct, to exhibit the temper of their minds as subjects of the divine law; do they show signs of cheerful, holy obedience? Does the observation of Christian parents and ministers teach them anything like this? Does not their observation rather confirm the truth of what the Scriptures declare, as quoted above? Was there ever a man, who labored in earnest to teach children the things of religion and to induce them to keep the divine commands, who did not find their inclinations mighty obstacles to his success? If children were uncorrupt and pure, they would, as soon as capable, show the proper signs of holiness. Children who are renewed early in life, manifest a desire after God, hatred and dread of sin, and delight in duty. But do not children in general show, at every period of childhood, that they have not the love of God in them; that they dislike the duties of religion and choose the ways of sin? You may set before them the most serious and tender considerations, and may succeed so far as to gain their attention and rouse their conscience. But you will find that their heart has a bias towards the pleasures of sin, which no consideration of duty or of happiness can overcome. With those who judge themselves by the law of God, is not this a matter of fact, a truth written as with a sun-beam? The earliest period of childhood to which their memory can extend, furnishes to their own minds abundant evidence of a disinclination to the duties and pleasures of religion, and a relish for the pleasures of sin. What is moral depravity, if this is not? I do not say that depravity at first, exists in the highest degree, and that children are at once ripe for atrocious deeds. I do not say that children are inclined to lie merely for the sake of lying, without any temptation. They may speak many truths to one falsehood,

as "the greatest liars" may. But we expect great liars will speak falsehood, when they have occasion to do it. Their telling lies now and then, when they have some bad ends to answer, may, as appears from the case which Dr. Ware mentions, render them highly criminal. So with children. They may generally be disposed, in the simplicity of their hearts, to speak the truth. But has not every one who has had the care of little children, found them inclined to lie when tempted to it? Does it not require unremitting care and every possible effort to guard them against the practice of lying, whenever they think it the way to exculpate themselves, or to secure any favorite gratification? And when a habit of lying is once formed in children, is it not found to be extremely difficult to correct it? The same might be said as to other tendencies of the youthful mind. When everything goes smoothly with children, and all their wishes are gratified, they may exhibit a disposition quite pleasant and friendly. So may persons arrived at manhood, though really possessed of a contrary disposition. But how is it with little children, when their wishes are crossed? How is it when they are flattered, and when they are slighted? Do they not very early show signs of the same temper of mind, which we see exhibited in active life by the proud, the envious, the selfish, the wrathful, and the revengeful? In short, if we find anything in mankind at large which furnishes proof of depravity, we find it in little children; not indeed in the same form or degree, for they are not capable of this. But we find what is of the same nature. And even as to form or degree; do not the pride, the selfishness, the ill-will, the revenge, exhibited by little children, resemble the same evil passions in a man, as much as their bodies or their minds resemble his? They have, in miniature, the understanding, the bodily strength, the features, and all the attributes of a man. And who that watches the character of children with the eye of a Christian or a philosopher, can have the least doubt, that they possess, in miniature, all the moral attributes, and especially the moral corruptions, which appear among men? As soon as they are capable, they show these corruptions by intelligible outward signs. And they show them

in a manner perfectly agreeable to the state and circumstances of childhood. True, they do not show them as soon as they are born. Nor do they show a rational mind as soon as they are born. And yet who ever doubted that children naturally possess a rational mind? Dr. Ware says that, "by their birth men become reasonable, accountable beings." But does a child actually show reason, as soon as he is born? And would Dr. Ware consider a child really accountable, as soon as he is born? But reason and accountableness universally belong to mankind; and children begin early to show signs of being reasonable and accountable beings, and exhibit more and more evidence of it, till they come to the understanding of a man. Now I refer it to impartial observers to judge, whether children do not exhibit as clear signs of moral evil, as they do of reason; and whether they do not begin to exhibit these signs as early as could be expected, allowing moral evil to be a native property of their minds. Although they are by nature depraved; still, in order that their depravity may be visibly acted out, they must not only be capable of showing it by outward signs, but must have occasion thus to show it. Now as soon as children have ability and occasion to show their dispositions, they generally exhibit as clear evidence of incipient depravity, as of intelligence. The occasion may not be constant, nor very frequent; any more than the occasion for actual falsehood among "the greatest liars." But this circumstance does not in either case affect the clearness of the evidence.

CHAPTER III.

WHETHER human depravity can in any proper sense be called *native*, *innate*, *natural*, or *hereditary*, is a question which calls for more particular discussion. There are many pretences against

the common doctrine, which ought to be exposed, and some difficulties attending it which ought, if possible, to be cleared away. Dr. Ware allows that "all men are sinners," but says, they are so by *habit*, not by *nature*. All the wickedness of man is, in his view, perfectly consistent with his coming into being innocent and pure. With a view to what he and others have advanced in opposition to the doctrine of *native* depravity, and to present the doctrine to others precisely in the light in which it has presented itself to my own mind, I shall allow myself in the following free discussion.

My first inquiry respects the proper meaning of the words commonly employed in stating the doctrine; such as *native*, *innate*, *natural*, *born with a depraved nature*, etc. To satisfy myself on this subject, I take a number of examples, in which the words are employed with undoubted propriety.

First. We say, man has a *natural disposition to society;* or he has *by nature* a propensity to social life; or he *naturally* possesses a social principle, or is *naturally* formed for society. Such phrases are frequent; nor did I ever hear any objection against them. But what is the fact which these phrases denote? Do children actually show a social principle, as soon as they are born? Do they immediately give visible signs of social affection, or of that propensity which is the foundation of domestic and civil society? Is it not a long time before they become capable of expressing or exercising the social principle? What then do we mean by its being *natural* to man, or his having it *by nature*, but that man is born with *such a constitution*, or in *such a state*, that if he is not turned aside from the real bent of his nature, he certainly will be a social being, or will be actually inclined to live in society; — that his being disposed to choose society, rather than solitude, results directly from the original constitution or tendency of his mind? If he choose a hermitage, he does violence to his nature; he shows that there has been some jar in his constitution, some unnatural shock to his temper.

Secondly. Man is *naturally pitiful*. He is born with a principle of sympathy, or compassion; — pity is one of the natural

principles of the human heart. These expressions do not mean that pity begins to show itself, or even to be distinctly exercised, as soon as man is born; but that *it uniformly results from his original constitution;* that it is the certain consequence of the state in which he is born, or the temper of mind which he possesses by his birth; and that it will in due time show itself, unless his nature is perverted.

Thirdly. Take what is commonly called *natural affection*, particularly the affection of parents for their offspring. Man is born with such a nature, or has such a tendency in his constitution, that, as soon as the relation exists, he feels the affection. However distant from his birth the time when it is first distinctly felt and acted out, it is called *natural*, because with such a nature or constitution as his, unbroken and unperverted, he will certainly feel the affection whenever he comes into the relation. The affection implies no refinement upon his nature. It rises naturally or spontaneously, like the affection which irrational animals show for their young.

Fourthly. We speak of a man as having an original strength of mind or liveliness of imagination, superior to what others possess. This may not appear for many years. But it is at length evident, that the difference cannot be accounted for by difference of culture, and so must arise from difference of original constitution. On this account we call it *native* superiority. We say, a man was *born a king*, or was *born a commander;* because uniformly, from early life, he showed marks of an elevated character, or qualities which fitted him to command. We consider those qualities *natural*, because they are no more owing to his education, than the features of his countenance; which may perhaps indicate as clearly as the qualities of his mind, his high destination.

Thus too we say of Handel, that he had a *native* or *inborn taste for music*, or that he was *born a musician;* because he showed that taste very early, and no influence of education or example could account for the difference, which existed between him and other men in this respect. Milton, we say, had a *native* sublimity

of mind and fruitfulness of invention, which qualified him to be a distinguished poet.

Again. We sometimes say of a bodily disease, that it is *native*, or that it was *born with a man;* because it appears manifestly to result from the original constitution of his body, though the disease did not show itself for many years. It is often said, a man was born with a consumptive constitution, or with a state of body which tended to a consumption; and it is deemed a matter of importance in the medical art, to discover when this is the case.

If another example were necessary, I might notice the manner in which we apply the words under consideration to irrational animals; as when we say, it is *natural* for serpents to bite; it is the *nature* of birds to fly; of lions to be carniverous; of fishes to swim. But the illustration has been pursued far enough to answer the purpose intended.

But how is the word *hereditary* used in relation to these subjects? It is common to speak of particular properties of mind and of body as *hereditary*, when they can most satisfactorily be accounted for on the common principle of a *likeness between parents and children.* There is a general resemblance which a child bears to his parents, as belonging to the same species; and a particular resemblance which he bears to them, as individuals. Observation shows that in regard to the faculties and dispositions of the mind, as well as the structure of the body, parents transmit to their offspring a general resemblance, and frequently a particular individual resemblance. With respect to each of these we say, that children *inherit* it, or derive it from their parents? Diseases are said to be hereditary in certain families, where they descend from generation to generation, and where they evidently result from something originally belonging to the constitution. There is a hereditary blindness and deafness; a hereditary firmness or weakness of bodily constitution; a hereditary strength or imbecility of mind. Wherever there is an obvious resemblance between children and their parents with respect to any properties of body or mind, especially if that resemblance has been the same for many generations, and is most easily accounted for on the

common principle, that children bear the likeness of their parents; we hesitate not to say, those properties are hereditary. And some respectable writers have been led by the particular opinions they have held on the subject, to speak of *piety* in the same manner. Southey says, "Talents of no ordinary kind, as well as a *devotional* temper, were *hereditary* in the family of the Wesleys."

Let us now bring this train of remarks to bear upon the subject of investigation. We inquire then, whether the circumstances, which lead us to apply the words *natural*, *native*, *innate*, and *hereditary*, to such bodily and mental properties, as those above mentioned, do in fact belong to the moral depravity or sinfulness of man. We ought to pursue this inquiry with special care, because the result must be of great consequence in settling the present controversy.

The first circumstance which occurs is, that moral depravity has been found in the human species from generation to generation. There never has been a single exception in any age. Dr. Ware mentions it as a truth which no one will deny, *that all men are sinners*. Moral depravity is as universal as reason, or memory, or social affection, or pity, or any of the bodily appetites. We can as easily find a man without any of these, as without sin. So far then as the universality of the fact is concerned, there is as much propriety in saying, that moral depravity is natural to man, as that the faculty of reason or any bodily appetite is so.

Another circumstance which justifies us in applying the epithets innate, natural, etc. to human depravity is, that it shows itself *very early*. We are indeed incapable of looking into the mind of an infant, and seeing the first motions of moral evil. And it is impossible that our memory should go back to what took place in our own minds during our infancy. But among the earliest things which our memory can recall in ourselves, or which we are able to observe in others, are found the indications and incipient exercises of sinful affection. Now if moral depravity evidently exists as far back as our recollection or our observation can reach; it is reasonable to think that it may exist still earlier, and that we should be perfectly satisfied of this, if we could in any

way trace back to an earlier period the operations of our own minds, or if children at an earlier period could, by any intelligible signs, indicate to us the moral state of their minds. In order that any affection may show itself by outward signs, and especially that its actings may be distinctly recollected, it must have acquired a considerable degree of strength. But is it not according to the law of our nature, that the affection should previously exist in a lower degree? We are indeed unable to determine how early depraved affection may begin to operate. But considering how early it rises to such strength as to make itself visible; and considering too the gradual growth of everything in the mind; can we avoid the conclusion, that it probably exists, though in a feebler state, much sooner than it becomes visible? May it not be with our moral nature in this respect, as it is with the peculiar properties of an eagle, a serpent, or a lion, which have always been considered as existing radically in the original constitution of the animal, though they begin to show themselves some time after? Be this, however, as it may; the actual appearance of moral evil in man is, in common cases, very early; so that as far as the period of its first occurrence is concerned, there is a plain reason for calling it natural, or innate.

Another circumstance, distinguishing those things which are properly called *natural* or *innate*, or which we say belong to man from the first, is, that they cannot be traced to any change in the constitution of his nature, subsequent to his birth, and do not presuppose such a change. If idiotism is occasioned by a fracture of the skull, or by the influence of disease, it is not called natural. But if no such calamity has befallen a man, who shows himself to be without understanding, and his want of mind results, as a direct consequence, from his original constitution; then his idiotism is called *natural*, or he is said to be *born an idiot*.

Now is the moral depravity of man to be traced to any calamity which has befallen him, or to any change which has taken place in his moral constitution, subsequently to his birth? Does it presuppose such a change? If a change takes place adequate to account for moral depravity; it must be an universal change,

because it must account for the fact that all are sinners. The position then would be that, although men are universally born without any disposition or tendency in their nature, which can account for the depravity they afterwards exhibit, a change uniformly takes place, which is the spring of all the moral evil actually found in man. And this change must take place very early, because it must precede the first appearance of moral evil. We have then under consideration a most important event; a universal change in the moral nature of man; a change which always takes place very early in childhood, and which satisfactorily accounts for all the sins which mankind commit. Now what is the cause of a change, so momentous in its nature and its results? Is that cause *extraneous* to the human mind, or *within* the mind? If any one should say, the cause is *extraneous* to the mind; then I should wish him to solve the difficulty of supposing, that our moral nature, without any faulty conduct of ours, is subjected to the calamitous influence of such a cause. Call that which is the cause of the change, "education, example, and circumstances," as Dr. Ware does, p. 27. It is a cause which is extraneous to the mind, and over which, especially at so early a period, we can have little or no control. I should wish Dr. Ware to show upon his own principles, how we can be accountable for the consequences of a change produced in such a manner. And before leaving the subject, I should be gratified to know, how he would make it appear consistent, that a God of infinite goodness should expose his feeble, helpless creatures, in the very first stage of their existence, to the operation of a cause so dreadful.

But if the cause of the supposed change is within the mind, it must consist in something which belongs to the original constitution of the mind, or in something which is superinduced upon the mind after its first existence. If it consists in something which belongs to the original constitution of the mind, then we are thrown back upon the very doctrine which Dr. Ware and others think it so important to shun. But if the cause of the supposed change consists in something which is superinduced upon the mind after

its first existence; it is certainly proper that we should inquire what that thing is, and by what means it has been superinduced upon the mind. And the answer, if there could be an answer, would only make way for another question, and that for another, and so on indefinitely.

These are some of the difficulties which attend the supposition, that the depravity which man actually exhibits, is owing to any calamity which befalls him, or to any change which takes place in his moral constitution, subsequently to his birth; while on the other hand, the supposition, if admitted, has no advantage whatever over the common supposition, that our actual wickedness is to be traced back to what is original or native in our moral constitution. It gives no convenience or clearness to any philosophical reasoning which we may pursue in relation to this subject; as it only presents other causes, of the existence of which we have no evidence, and which, if they were real, must after all be traced back to the original constitution of our nature. The supposition has no advantage in regard to our views of the divine character, it being every way as easy to reconcile it with the goodness of God, that he should give us originally a constitution, which uniformly results in actual transgression, as that he should expose us to the operation of causes such as Dr. Ware names, p. 27, which afterwards produce a change from purity to pollution.

Against the supposition of such a change in our nature, there are strong objections. In the first place, so far as our observation goes, all the causes which operate upon the human mind are suited only to excite to action the powers and dispositions actually belonging to our nature, but not to change that nature. Secondly, the supposition of such a change in our nature is wholly *unphilosophical*, because wholly *unnecessary*. It is as unphilosophical, as to suppose a change of nature in order to account for the serpent's venomous bite, the lion's fierceness, or that intelligence, gratitude, sympathy, and kindness of man which Dr. Ware considers as natural. Thirdly. The uniformity of the fact that men become sinners, seems to denote that it results from the settled constitution of our nature, and not from any accidental cause. We

reason thus respecting things which uniformly take place in the physical world; and why not in the moral world? If our becoming sinners were not owing to a steady law or principle of our nature, but to some accidental cause, we should certainly expect to find some exceptions. The uniform motions of the planets denote a uniform cause, a settled constitution of nature; while the occasional appearance of transient meteors denotes occasional, transient causes. If there were no settled law of nature respecting the motion of the planets, who would expect to find their motions constant and invariable?

Now just as far as there is evidence, that man's actual sinfulness is owing to the original constitution of his moral nature, and not to any change in his nature experienced after his birth, just so far we have reason to consider his depravity natural.

I have yet another reason for considering man's depravity *natural.* I look at other principles in man, which are generally considered natural, such as the animal appetites, the love of parents for their offspring, and also that gratitude, compassion, and kindness, which Dr. Ware notices, "as original attributes of human nature." These natural principles operate *freely* and *spontaneously.* It requires no laborious discipline to produce them, no urgency of motives to excite them to action. When the proper occasion occurs, they arise at once. This is a general mark of those active principles, which are allowed to be *native* properties of man. The same mark distinguishes man's moral depravity. Take children, as soon as they are capable of manifesting what they are; and let the occasion for exercising a corrupt affection occur. How soon is it excited? How spontaneously does the feeling of pride, ill will, and revenge show itself in their looks and actions? It gets possession of them before they are aware. It arises of its own accord, before they have considered whether it is good or bad. They first learn its turpitude from having felt its operation in their own minds. And it is the case not only in childhood, but in every period of life, that sinful affections arise readily, as soon as the occasion occurs. So far then as this circumstance has influence, it is a justification of the doctrine of native depravity.

But moral evil in man has still another mark of being natural or innate; and that is, that *it is hard to be eradicated, and resists powerful means of overcoming it.* From this we are led to think that it has taken deep root in man's nature, and is not an accidental or superficial thing. The Christian, who makes the greatest efforts to eradicate his depraved affections, has, from his own experience, the clearest evidence that they adhere to the very constitution of his moral nature; that they make a part of himself; and that getting rid of them is like cutting off a hand or plucking out an eye. He has evidence too, that while the heart is unrenewed, or while man continues in his natural state, no dictate of conscience, no motive or influence which can be brought to bear upon his mind, can subdue his selfishness and pride, or induce him to love God and be humble. This fact is as well supported by experience as any fact whatever in the history of the mind. And as there is no other way, but experience, to prove it, on supposition of its real existence, my last appeal for the truth of the orthodox doctrine of depravity will be to the experience of Christians.

There is one circumstance of human depravity which justice requires me distinctly to notice, as it seems utterly incapable of being reconciled to any scheme but the orthodox. When we look upon a new-born child, we predict that he will certainly be a sinner. It is not a conjecture, nor a probability, but a certainty. It is a thing which no precautions, no circumstances whatever can prevent. Suppose the child to be in the hands of parents, nurses and tutors, as holy as angels, so that he shall never hear anything but words of truth and love, and never see anything but examples of excellence; still we should predict with certainty that he will not escape the pollution of sin; that he will be a transgressor of the divine law. Now such a prediction as this must rest on some fixed principle, some certain, uniform cause; just like our prediction respecting the future development which the child will make of any bodily or mental power. We know beforehand, that if the child is free from special defects, he will speak, and walk, and love, and desire, and remember. This foreknowledge rests upon

the full evidence we have, that such is *the settled law of human nature.* It is precisely on the same ground, that we predict the future transgression of the new-born infant. The prediction does not imply any particular knowledge of this individual child, in distinction from other children; for, in the case supposed, we only know that he is *human.* We found our prediction solely upon the fact, that the child has *human nature.* And that it is the invariable law of his nature, that he will be a transgressor. If there is no such steady cause, no such invariable law, how can we certainly conclude that a particular child, born of pious, faithful, exemplary parents, will be a sinner? May not the child, if such as Dr. Ware supposes every infant to be,—"innocent, pure, free from all disposition or tendency to sin," and under the salutary influence of the best of parents;—may not such a child be secured against moral evil? Or if this child should not escape those calamitous causes, which are supposed to turn our nature from innocence to vice, how do we know that some other child of Adam may not? If there is no steady, no uniformly operating law of nature, leading to moral evil, or as Dr. Ware expresses it, "if man is by nature no more inclined or disposed to vice than to virtue," may we not suppose that one of a thousand, or at least one of eight hundred millions, will retain his original purity, and go through this short life without becoming a sinner? But we are forbidden to suppose this by that sober observation, which teaches us the truth of our Saviour's maxim, that "no man can gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles." The cause in the former case is indeed *moral;* in the latter, *physical.* But in both cases the cause which operates is constant; and it is the constancy or uniformity of the cause, which enables us, in either case, to form a certain judgment respecting the constancy of the effect. Now in any such case, where do we look for the cause of a constant, uniform effect, but in the nature or constitution of the thing? If this reason is substantially correct, what can be more proper than to call the sinfulness of man *natural, original, innate?*

It might here be expected that I should argue particularly from

those texts which teach that our sinfulness results from the original constitution of our nature; from various maxims and rules of Scripture, implying a bias in human nature, which it is the object of Christian instruction and discipline to correct; and particularly from the representations of the New Testament, that man has, by his natural birth, that carnal mind which is opposite to holiness, and on account of which he needs to be born again. But the arguments derived from these sources were distinctly brought to view in my Letters to Unitarians; and I cheerfully leave it to the judgment of my readers, whether anything has been offered to diminish their force.

I have now stated the leading considerations, which prove the depravity of man to be *native*, *natural*, *innate*. These, with the Scripture arguments alluded to, are, to say the least, as good reasons why we should believe moral depravity to be a *native*, *original attribute of man*, as any which Dr. Ware can have for believing "kindness, gratitude, and love of truth" to be so. I admit that these and other things of like kind, if taken with proper explanations, are, as Dr. Ware represents them, *natural* properties of man. But let him tell us why they are to be considered as natural; and then we may see whether the reasons which prove them to be natural, are stronger than those which prove human depravity to be so.

CHAPTER IV.

The principal objections against the doctrine which I attempted to defend in the preceding chapter, and the principal difficulties in which it is thought to be involved, will now be made the subject of particular consideration.

Notwithstanding the universal prevalence of moral evil, and all the arguments which have been adduced to prove that it is *natural*

to man, like those other appetites and affections which are, on both sides, regarded in this light; there are, it is said, special reasons against considering *moral evil* to be a natural property of man; reasons strong enough to countervail all the arguments in favor of the orthodox doctrine. These reasons are, that *the doctrine of native depravity is inconsistent with the moral attributes of God, and with moral agency in man.* Objections like these are arrayed against the common doctrine of native depravity by Dr. John Taylor, and many other writers, and are suggested by Dr. Ware in several passages in his Letters.

Here I must take the liberty to remark, as I remarked in my Letters to Unitarians, that the reasoning of those who urge objections in this manner, is altogether unphilosophical, and can never be allowed either in physics or theology. The particular fault to which I refer in their reasoning is, that they consider a difficulty which they are not able to solve, sufficient to disprove a doctrine which is supported by clear and conclusive evidence. In the science of the mind, as well as in natural philosophy, the legitimate object of research is, not to determine what is *possible* or *consistent*, but to discover what is *fact*. What would be thought of me, should I regulate my inquiries in natural philosophy by the principle involved in the reasoning referred to? I start with a full belief of the common doctrine of philosophy, that all material substances have the power of attraction. By and by facts occur, which indicate that, in certain cases, material substances have the power of *repulsion*. But as I am unable to see how this power can consist with the other, I will not admit its existence. Or, if I admit the existence of *repulsion*, I will no longer admit *attraction*. Am I now a disciple of Newton?

The falsity of the reasoning above described is no less obvious, in relation to the doctrine of depravity. The proper inquiry is, what is taught by the word of God, and by the facts which fall under our observation? I ought to come to this inquiry with a mind as free from prepossession, as that with which a physician inquires whether his patient exhibits the signs of a consumption. And if I find such proof that depravity natu-

rally belongs to man, as satisfies me that any other properties of man are natural, I have come to the end of my inquiry. So far as my belief of the fact is concerned, I have nothing to do with the question, how this fact is consistent with the perfections of God, or with the moral agency of man, or with anything else. I say not this, however, because I have the least reluctance to consider the question of consistency in its proper place; but to show that, in our reasoning, the consideration of consistency is to be made entirely distinct from the consideration of the evidence which proves the fact. If I would be either a philosopher or a Christian, I must believe what is clearly proved to be fact, whether I am able to reconcile the fact with other things which I believe, or not. Nor must I suffer my views of the clearness and competency of the proof, or my mode of coming to the discovery of it, to be influenced by any difficulty I may feel as to the consistency of the fact to be proved by other facts. But I say this, not because I suppose that two facts or truths which are to be believed are in any case really inconsistent with each other; but because we may not in every case be under advantages to discover *how* they are consistent.

To come at a still clearer view of the error against which I would guard; suppose some one should say, that my believing the power of repulsion to exist in matter is inconsistent with my believing the power of attraction; or should charge me with denying attraction, because I believed repulsion. And suppose this pretended inconsistency of repulsion with attraction should be perpetually mentioned, as proving conclusively that matter can have no such property as the power of repulsion. In reply I should say, first, that a man's being unable to see the consistency of the two powers is no proof of a real inconsistency. Secondly. The question whether there is such a thing as repulsion, must depend entirely on its proper evidence, and must be discussed without any regard to the alleged inconsistency of repulsion with attraction. If repulsion is proved to exist by clear evidence, I should be a child, and not a philosopher, to refuse it a place in my belief because it is difficult to reconcile it with something else.

I entertain the same views of the proper mode of reasoning on the subject of man's natural depravity; and these views I exhibited in my fourth Letter, to which I beg leave particularly to refer the reader. After several remarks, intended to simplify the object of inquiry, I said: "These remarks are intended to show that according to the just principles of reasoning in such a case, we have nothing to do with the inquiry, whether the common doctrine of depravity can consist with the moral perfection of God, etc. If I say, this doctrine cannot be true, because I cannot reconcile it with the goodness of God; it is the same as saying, I am an infallible judge, and my opinion must stand, though opposed by the declarations of Scripture and the evidence of facts. To take such a position would be an effectual bar to conviction, and render all reasoning useless. If we would regulate our investigations on this subject by correct principles, we must reject totally every prepossession against the doctrine of depravity, and must restrict ourselves to this single inquiry, *what is true in fact?* If the subject is one on which the Scripture undertakes to decide; the question is, *what saith the Scripture?* If, when we pursue our inquiry, we find that the Scripture, interpreted without the influence of any prepossession, and according to just rules, teaches that man is by nature unholy; this must unhesitatingly be admitted as a certain truth. That God declares it is proof enough. If observation and experience teach the same truth, we are to admit it as doubly confirmed. As to the goodness of God, we know it from other evidence."

Dr. Ware thinks the course I pursued, in regard to this subject, liable to objection. "This is certainly a very extraordinary thought," he says, "that in defending his system against an objection to which it is thought liable, he should have nothing to do with the very objection itself, nor with the difficulty it involves. Did the question relate to the simple fact, whether the doctrine of depravity, as maintained by the orthodox, were a doctrine of Scripture or not, its consistency or inconsistency with the moral perfections of God would indeed make no part of the ground on which the argument should proceed." p. 12.

My reply to this and to what stands connected with it, is a very easy one. The grand point at issue was and is, whether the orthodox doctrine of depravity is true. I was aware that Mr. Channing and others had not made this the grand point at issue, and, to expose what I considered a mistake in them, and to simplify the object of inquiry, I made the remarks in my fourth Letter. I represented that the great inquiry in relation to this subject, ought to be; "Do the Scriptures, understood according to just rules of interpretation, teach the doctrine of native depravity?" Now if this were really to be made the chief topic of inquiry, Dr. Ware himself allows, that "the consistency or inconsistency of the doctrine with the moral perfections of God would indeed make no part of the ground on which the argument should proceed." The fact was, that it had often been mentioned as a decisive reason against believing the doctrine of depravity, that it is inconsistent with the moral perfection of God. If an *appearance* of such inconsistency had been mentioned merely as a difficulty attending an important Scripture doctrine, the case would have been different. But its absolute inconsistency with the divine perfections had been asserted, as conclusively disproving the truth of the doctrine. I undertook to show that such a mode of reasoning is altogether unphilosophical, and that it would be seen to be so in other like cases. And I now say again, that what I have represented to be the grand inquiry is not to be shackled with any other matters. If, indeed, after we have proved from legitimate sources of evidence that man is by nature depraved, any one chooses to bring into view the difficulty of reconciling the doctrine with the divine perfections, I will be so far from attempting to evade the difficulty, that I will apply myself with all possible diligence and care to solve it. And this I shall do before leaving the subject. But, after all, whether I succeed in solving the difficulty or not, the ground of my faith in the doctrine is the same. I believe it, because it is taught in the Scriptures; just as the philosopher believes what thorough investigation shows to be fact, whether he finds himself able to reconcile it with other facts or not.

But Dr. Ware insists, p. 12, 13, that it certainly does belong to him, who would relieve the orthodox system from the imputation of being inconsistent with the divine perfections, to prove that it is consistent. For the sake of elucidating more fully the principle of reasoning under consideration, I will allow, for the present, that it does belong to me to prove this consistency. And I will give, in very few words, the kind of proof which I now have to offer. Let then the alleged inconsistency *appear* ever so great, even as great and as hard to be removed as Unitarians suppose; I shall consider it as valid evidence of a real consistency, if I show by proper arguments, first, *that God possesses moral perfection*, and secondly, *that man is by nature depraved.* I am speaking now of the kind of proof that is to be relied upon, not attempting to exhibit the proof at full length. Suppose each of the two positions just stated to be supported by suitable evidence. I adduce the simple fact, that *both positions are shown to be true*, as *satisfactory proof of their real consistency with each other.* In many cases this may be the only possible method of proof; because we may not be able to bring the two things together by a direct comparison, and in that way to show that they are consistent with each other. This principle is much used in Geometry. In some cases, where we cannot compare two things together so as to prove their agreement with each other directly, we compare them both with a third, and, by making out their agreement with that, we prove their agreement with each other. Their agreement with the third is the medium of proof. So in the case under consideration. Even if we could do nothing by a direct comparison of the two positions, towards proving a mutual consistency, the fact, that each of them is shown by proper evidence to be true, must be taken as evidence that they are consistent. This is the only way in which a thousand things in physics, and in the philosophy of the mind, can ever be proved to be consistent with each other. And it is the only way in which men, who are completely disentangled from the hypothetical philosophy, deem it necessary to attempt a proof.

But Dr. Ware shows, at the end of Letter II, that he is of a

very different opinion, as to this principle of reasoning. He says, that *I have contented myself with endeavoring to prove the doctrines of orthodoxy as matters of fact, upon the principle, that if I could clearly prove them to be doctrines of Scripture, I should not be bound to show how they can be consistent with the divine perfections.* He signifies his disapprobation of all this, and declares that, as I have proceeded thus, *it is unnecessary to say anything more, to show that the imputation of our holding doctrines inconsistent with the divine perfections is not removed.* To this remarkable passage I request the reader to give some close attention. The principle on which I proceeded in my reasoning, as Dr. Ware here observes, was this; that if I could clearly prove our doctrines to be matters of fact and doctrines of Scripture, I should not be bound to show, in any other way, how they can be consistent with the divine perfections. Now, he says, as I have contented myself with an attempt made according to this principle, the imputation of our holding opinions inconsistent with the divine perfections remains; that is to say, my having clearly proved our doctrines to be doctrines of Scripture, if I had done it, would not be enough to prove them consistent with the divine perfections; — for this is the same as his saying, that my having clearly proved our doctrines to be doctrines of Scripture would not remove the imputation of our holding doctrines inconsistent with the divine perfections; and this is the same as to say, that, for aught we know, the Scriptures may contain doctrines inconsistent with the divine perfections. I should be sorry to think, that this is the ground-work of Dr. Ware's reasoning on this subject. But it really is so, unless he is so unfortunate as not to express what he intends; or unless I am so unfortunate as to misinterpret his language. But truly I see not how I could avoid the conclusion above stated. For if the principle on which he says I proceeded, and on which I indeed meant to proceed, that if I could clearly prove our doctrines to be doctrines of Scripture, we should be free from the imputation of holding doctrines inconsistent with the divine perfections — if this principle is to be rejected, it must be because the Bible may contain doctrines inconsistent with the

divine perfections. If Dr. Ware would agree to the position, that the Bible teaches nothing really inconsistent with the divine perfections, he would then consider my proving the doctrines in question to be doctrines of Scripture as removing every pretence that I hold doctrines inconsistent with those perfections. I know, indeed, that Dr. Ware did not mean to admit that I had proved our doctrines to be taught in the Bible. But what he says implies, that if I had proved this, and had done no more, I should still be chargeable with holding doctrines inconsistent with the perfections of God; which is really the same as if he should charge the *Scriptures* with teaching doctrines inconsistent with those perfections.*

As this subject is of great consequence in the regulation of our inquiries, and as my wish is to make it perfectly intelligible to every reader; I beg leave to exhibit my views in a varied form.

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* *Note to the Present Edition.*

Writers maintaining Unitarian and Pelagian opinions, hold it to be a valid objection to the doctrine of native depravity, that the doctrine *is inconsistent with God's moral attributes.* I suppose they only mean to say, it *seems to them inconsistent;* in other words, *they cannot see how it is inconsistent.* But would it be too much for them to remember, that their understanding is limited, and that things may really *be* consistent with each other, although *they* are not able to see *how* they are consistent?

The greatest and best of men have acknowledged themselves unable, by reasoning, to reconcile the existence of evil in the creation with the perfections of the Creator. But have they, on that account, denied either the existence of evil or the perfections of the Creator? No. They have fully believed both these truths, and have believed them to be perfectly consistent with each other, although they have confessed themselves unable to show *how* they are consistent.

Atheistical philosophers have been exceedingly reckless in such matters. One of them, as I recollect, particularly describes the dreadful disorders and miseries of mankind, and then asserts the utter impossibility of reconciling these evils with the existence of a Being of infinite power and benevolence, and hence draws the conclusion that no such Being exists. Every Christian man will say, that author was a wretched reasoner. But my reasoning would be little better than his, if I should deny the existence of those evils, because I cannot reconcile them with the moral attributes of God. Do not Unitarians violate the principle of sound reasoning in a similar way, when they deny the native depravity of man, which is proved by such a variety of arguments, because they cannot make out its consistency with the divine attributes?

The positions which I have labored to establish, as the regulating principles of our reasoning, and of our faith, particularly on this subject, are these: 1. The grand inquiry is, what is taught by the word of God? 2. Though the Scriptures contain doctrines which may have an *appearance* of being inconsistent with the divine perfections, they contain none which are inconsistent in reality. 3. As soon as any doctrine is clearly proved to be a doctrine of Scripture, it is, for that reason alone, entitled to our faith; and even if we should entirely fail of showing its consistency with other truths to the satisfaction of an objector, we could not, on that account, be justly charged with holding a doctrine inconsistent with those truths. Will Dr. Ware agree to these principles? Will he grant that we are first of all to inquire, whether any doctrine under consideration is clearly taught in the word of God; and if it is shown to be taught there, will he grant that it is, *on that ground alone*, to be received as true, and that, *being true*, it is really consistent with all other truths, and particularly with that great truth, that God possesses infinite moral perfections? My wish is to determine what is, in this case, *the right mode of reasoning*, waiving for the present the question, whether the result of it will be favorable or unfavorable to the orthodox doctrine. I simply ask whether Dr. Ware allows that the mode of reasoning above proposed is valid — not whether he thinks I have succeeded in proving the doctrine of native depravity to be taught in the word of God, but whether *if I should prove* the doctrine to be plainly taught in God's word, he would consider this as conclusive proof, first of its *truth*, and then of its *consistency with God's perfections*. If he does not grant this, — as I was led to think from a few sentences in his Letters, — then I ask, why he does not. Is it because he thinks the holy Scriptures may contain doctrines not consistent with God's attributes, and that, if I prove a doctrine which I hold, to be plainly taught in the Scriptures, I may still be

chargeable with holding what is inconsistent with those attributes?

But after all Dr. Ware's real meaning may not be what I have understood from his language; and he may, cheerfully and fully accede to the principle of reasoning which I have been laboring to establish. The principle is this; — and if the word of God is true, it will stand forever; — namely, that clearly proving any doctrines to be doctrines of Scripture, is, by necessary implication, proving them to be consistent with the divine perfections; that, in this controversy, the simple inquiry should be, *what do the Scriptures teach?* and that, in pursuing this inquiry, and in estimating the value of evidence which bears upon it, we ought not to be influenced by the apprehension, that we may not be able to show how the doctrines in question are consistent with the character of God. From this principle it would follow, that if any man finds, in regard to the doctrines of orthodoxy, that he has been influenced by an appearance or apprehension of their inconsistency with the divine perfections, and that in this way he has been prepossessed against these doctrines, and has refused to be convinced of their truth by evidence which would be satisfactory in other cases; it is high time for him to inquire, whether he has not neglected the proper rules of reasoning, and whether he is not in danger of wandering from the path of divine truth. He ought to keep in mind, that such short-sighted creatures as we are may, in a thousand cases, be unable to see *how* things can be consistent which really are so; and that we may think we see an inconsistency, when, if we had a greater extent or clearness of vision, we might think very differently. While he rejects a doctrine, which is fully supported by Scripture, because he is unable to see how the doctrine can consist with something else; he places a reliance upon the strength of his understanding to which it is not entitled, and opens the door for a wide-spreading skepticism.

Under the influence of such mistaken views, as those just alluded to, a philosopher examines the proof of a general deluge, and finds it clear and strong. But he determines not to believe it, because he cannot see *how* it could have been consistent with the justice and goodness of God to destroy a world by a deluge. You tell him, it is clearly taught in the Bible, which he professes to receive as the word of God, and that it ought, on that account alone, to be believed, whatever difficulties may seem to attend it. But he avers, that it is totally inconsistent with the goodness of God, who is the Father of his creatures; "that we can make no supposition upon the ground of which we shall be able to see that it can be consistent;" that it ought therefore to be rejected; and that the few texts of Scripture which seem to favor it, must be explained in some other way, so that they may give no support to a fact, which "certainly admits of no reconciliation with any notion we can have of the moral perfection of the Author of our being."

The same philosopher casts his eye over the destruction of Sodom by fire from heaven, and of Jerusalem by the Roman army. His sensibilities are shocked by the idea of such scenes of distress and desolation. That God should visit so great a multitude of people, including so many thousands of harmless infants, with such overwhelming judgments, seems totally irreconcilable with his paternal character. Our philosopher, who feels for his fellow-creatures, cannot think that a Being of infinite compassion could ever have taken pleasure in witnessing so awful an event, brought about too by his own agency. And though the evidence from history is such as would satisfy him in other cases, he thinks it cannot be satisfactory in this, as it would involve us in the belief of a fact, so inconsistent with the moral perfection of God. So far as the Bible is concerned, instead of openly rejecting its authority, he goes about to put such a sense upon it as he thinks it *ought* to have. He claims the right of proceeding in this way from one subject to another, and of rejecting or modifying any texts of Scripture, so that they may not oppose the notion which he has suffered to preoccupy his mind, in regard to the

character of God. He seems to see that the common doctrines of depravity, atonement, election, regeneration, and the endless punishment of the wicked are incapable of being reconciled with the divine perfections. According to his maxim, therefore, these doctrines must all be rejected; and the Bible must be so explained as to give them no support.

Now the foundation of such a philosopher's reasoning is just this. He has more confidence in his own preconceptions, than in the word of God. While he ought to guide his reason by the dictates of revelation; he labors to conform the dictates of revelation to the hasty judgments of reason. See how clearly and strongly the Scriptures assert the natural corruption of man. If with half the clearness and strength they asserted his native purity, how would Unitarians glory in the firm foundation of their faith? But no sooner does the word of God begin to assert man's native depravity, than it has to encounter a strong preconception, that the doctrine cannot consist with God's moral perfection, and cannot be true. Our opponents think that the Scriptures do not teach the doctrine. But would they think so, were they not biassed by a prejudice against the doctrine? And must it not be evident even to themselves, that such a prejudice is likely to prevent all impartial investigation of the evidence which supports the doctrine? How can there be an impartial investigation of the meaning of Scripture by those, who have prejudged what its meaning must, or must not be? Is it not obvious, that they judge differently in regard to other doctrines, against which their prejudices are not arrayed? Is not evidence of inferior clearness perfectly satisfactory on a thousand other subjects? But here, according to the maxims which govern our opponents, it seems impossible they should ever be convinced. Let the Scriptures say what they will; let them assert the doctrine of native depravity, and the other doctrines allied to it, in language ever so plain, and in circumstances which show, according to all just rules of interpretation, what the sense must be; and let it appear from the conduct of the writers, and from what they exhibited of their own feelings, that they did actually regard these doctrines as divine

truths; it still answers no purpose with our opponents. For they meet all this with the argument, that these doctrines can never be reconciled with the moral perfections of God. Viewing the doctrines in this light, and entertaining this strong prepossession against them, they can receive no result of experience, and no declaration of Scripture, as conclusive evidence of their truth. I say then, that so long as they suffer that notion of inconsistency to occupy their minds, and to control their faith; it is idle to cite the Scriptures as evidence. If Paul himself were here, and should declare the doctrines, as we understand them, to be according to truth; they would even then reject them. Just so far as their maxim is adopted, the authority of the Bible is given up, and the discussion proceeds on the ground of mere natural reason. Even after it has been clearly proved that any particular doctrines are taught in the Bible; we must still inquire at the oracle of reason, whether those doctrines are worthy to be received.

I am aware that presenting the reasoning of our opponents in this light may be thought to savor but little of candor. But truly, I think they will not hesitate to acknowledge, that so far as the exercise of candor is concerned, I can justify myself by appealing to the standard which they themselves have established. For if it is consistent with candor for them to charge us with denying the moral perfection of God, or with holding sentiments implying such a denial; why should I be thought deficient in candor for endeavoring to show, that they entertain sentiments, or adopt a mode of reasoning, which involves the denial of the truth and authority of the Scriptures?

The same remarks apply to the other part of the objection against the evidence of native depravity; namely; that it cannot be admitted to be conclusive, because the doctrine is inconsistent with moral agency. But without repeating these remarks, I will just say, that it would be as proper for me to deny man's moral agency on account of its apparent inconsistency with the doctrine of depravity, as for others to deny man's depravity, on account of its apparent inconsistency with moral agency.

Let it not however be supposed, from any of the foregoing remarks, that I wish to avoid direct and free inquiry respecting the consistency of our doctrine of depravity with the moral perfection of God; or that I think there is no other way of meeting the objection under consideration, than the one which I have thus far pursued. But whether I succeed or not in my attempt to show, by another mode of reasoning, that the doctrine of depravity is reconcilable with the moral perfection of God and the moral agency of man, I shall consider the doctrine as worthy of unhesitating belief, with only this support — that it is taught in the holy Scriptures.

Nor let it be supposed from the foregoing remarks, that I apprehend any peculiar difficulty in showing the consistency of native depravity with the divine perfections. There is certainly no contradiction in the terms; that is, the proposition which affirms the native depravity of man, does not, in the terms of it, contain a denial of the perfection of God. The inconsistency, if there is any, must be made to appear by an investigation of *the subject*. If Dr. Ware soberly thinks that there is an inconsistency; he ought not to content himself with such a bare assertion of it, as is suited to make an impression on those who will not give themselves the trouble of thinking, or to excite prejudice in those who are governed by sounds and first appearances. It behooves him to support his charge of inconsistency by substantial evidence. But it cannot surely be considered as having anything of the nature of evidence, for him to say, *that we can make no supposition upon which we shall be able to perceive the consistency between natural depravity and the divine goodness, or that the doctrine of native depravity certainly admits of no reconciliation with any notion we can have of the moral perfection of God.* These are strong affirmations, and doubtless express the real conviction of the writer. But he cannot expect us to receive them as *arguments*. Should I think it best to make affirmations in the same way, expressive of *my* views on this subject; I should say, in direct opposition to what has just been quoted from our author, that there is a very plain supposition, upon which we are able to

perceive the perfect consistency of native depravity and divine goodness; namely; that the existence of man, with such a nature or character as we ascribe to him, may, in the administration of a perfect moral government, be made ultimately conducive to the great end of benevolence, that is, the happiness of the universe. Or I should say thus; that man's native depravity is not in the least inconsistent with divine *justice*, if it be so that, notwithstanding his native depravity, he never suffers more than what he truly deserves for his own personal sins; — not inconsistent with divine *goodness*, if man's depravity is made an effectual means of promoting the object at which goodness aims; — and not inconsistent with *wisdom*, if the system of which fallen man is a part, is so contrived, that it is suited to promote the best end in the best manner.

But although, in this brief statement, I have made a supposition, according to which the native depravity of man must appear reconcilable with God's moral perfections; I shall not stop here; but shall proceed, once for all, freely to investigate this subject, and to inquire, whether there is any force in the objection, so often and so triumphantly repeated, that the doctrine of native depravity is totally inconsistent with the moral perfection of God, and can, on no supposition whatever, be reconciled with it.

What then do my opponents mean by saying, that anything is inconsistent with the moral perfection of God? that is, with his benevolence, or goodness? Most obviously they must mean, that if that doctrine is true, or if that event takes place, God cannot be good, in other words, that he cannot have benevolent feelings, and cannot pursue the end of a benevolent administration. It is clear that the end of true benevolence, whether in feeling or in action, is to do good, to promote real happiness. And if the being who possesses perfect benevolence, has also an infinite understanding, and is capable of comprehending a vast system of intelligent beings, which extends to eternity; the object of his benevolence must be the happiness of such a system — the highest degree of happiness of which that system is capable, taken in its whole extent and duration. Now the native depravity of man is

plainly consistent with the divine benevolence, if it is, on the whole, consistent with the greatest good of the intelligent system. Do you ask how it can possibly be made consistent? I answer, it may, in one way or another, be the means of making a brighter and more diversified display of the divine perfections, and thus of giving the intelligent creation, as a whole, a higher knowledge and enjoyment of God. It may be the means of illustrating more clearly the excellence of the law and government of God, and of producing ultimately through his moral kingdom, a purer and more ardent attachment to his character and his administration; so that his intelligent creatures, by means of the instruction and discipline in this way afforded, may be brought ultimately to a state of higher perfection and enjoyment, than they could attain in any other way. Through the vigilant wisdom and justice of civil rulers, such a happy result of rebellion sometimes appears in human governments. And why may it not be so in the divine government, which is directed by wisdom and justice infinitely more vigilant, and controlled by power infinitely more efficacious, than any human government? If in the ways here suggested, or in other ways, the depravity of man may be made to subserve the end of the divine administration, its existence is plainly consistent with the divine goodness; or, which is the same thing, it may exist, and yet God show himself to be infinitely good. The subject of native depravity is, in this respect, explained on the same principle with that of moral evil generally. If you ask, how the existence of moral evil can be consistent with the moral perfections of God; you ask a question of as difficult solution as the one we have been considering; and the proper answer to it must, in my view, be the same.

But has anything ever taken place under the divine administration, which in any degree illustrates this subject? Are there any facts which tend to show, that the solution I have given of the difficulty is conformable to truth, and ought to be satisfactory?

In reply, I refer the reader to all the instances recorded in the Scriptures, and all which have occurred in the common course

of divine providence, in which the sins of men have been made the occasion of glory to God, and of good to his kingdom. These instances press upon our notice from every quarter. But I shall content myself with suggesting one or two of those which are most remarkable. No one will think it strange, that I should here mention the case of the Egyptian king; which I do, not because it is a case essentially different from others, but because the Scriptures make it a subject of particular remark, and give an explanation of it, which fully confirms the general principle involved in my reasoning. In a passage too weighty to be overlooked, and in language too plain to be misunderstood, God himself expressly informs us of the very purpose for which he raised that wicked man to the throne of Egypt. Exod. 9: 16. Was not the purpose which in that case God had in view, and which he actually accomplished, a benevolent purpose? And were not all the means he employed, consistent with his moral perfections? And can anything be clearer, than that the principal means employed was the diversified display the Egyptian monarch made of the most impious pride, and the most unrelenting hardness of heart? It is utterly in vain to attempt an enumeration of the instances, more or less remarkable, in which the sinful passions and actions of man have been made to praise God. The work of redemption exhibits this wonderful subserviency of moral evil to a benevolent end, with the greatest possible clearness. All those acts of God in the salvation of men, which are "to the praise of the glory of his grace," and all the songs of thanksgiving among the redeemed in heaven, are occasioned by human transgression. And a careful examination of this subject will show not only the fact, that moral evil is so overruled by the divine hand as to be made actually subservient to the end of benevolence, but something of the *manner* in which it is done. I will only add here, that in regard to this subserviency of evil to good, there can be no distinction between moral evil generally, and that which is *native*. For if moral evil, occurring at *any* period of man's life, may be made to contribute to the end of a benevolent administration; why may not that which occurs at the earliest period?

Such, in brief, are my views, as to the actual consistency of man's native depravity with the divine perfections. I turn now to the objector, who thinks native depravity to be inconsistent with the divine perfections. Let him tell me definitely, *why* it is inconsistent. Because man, from the first of his existence as a moral agent, is sinful, does God cease to be good? May not God so overrule the corruption of our nature, that, in the final result of his administration, it shall be the occasion of a brighter display of his holiness, and an augmentation of happiness in his universal empire? Cannot Omnipotence bring good out of evil in this case as well as in others? How does it appear, that the moral perfection of God must necessarily preclude the existence of sin in man, at the commencement of his moral agency? Will the objector say, that *native* sinfulness, if it should exist, must of necessity be attributed to the *immediate agency* of God, and that this would make him the cause of moral evil in a sense obviously inconsistent with his infinite holiness? I would request the objector, before adopting such a conclusion, to allow himself time for a little free inquiry. — Does not moral evil actually exist? Are not all men sinners? If so, then it must be allowed by both parties, that moral evil has a *beginning* in men. It is true, that Unitarians differ from us as to the time of its beginning. But when we assert that man is a sinner as soon as he is a moral agent, we no more attribute sin to the immediate agency of God, than those do, who assert that sin begins at any subsequent period. Show me how sin may begin to exist at any period of man's life, without implying an agency of God inconsistent with his holiness; and I will show you how it may begin to exist at the earliest period, without implying such an agency? If you say that sin, when it exists in mature age, is the free, unconstrained action of a rational and accountable being, and that all its guilt is chargeable upon him, and not upon God; I say the same respecting that sin, which we suppose belongs to man at his first existence as a moral agent. It is the act of a rational, accountable being; an act as free and unconstrained as any which takes place during his whole life; and none the less free and uncon-

strained, because for a time it may begin and end in the affections. This is true of a thousand sins, of which men are guilty in every period of their life; sins which exist merely in the affections of the mind, and are visible only to the eye of conscience and of God. Now I think it manifest, that between the affections found in a state of manhood, and those in early childhood, there is no difference as to their *nature*, though there is a wide difference as to their *strength*. But there can be no difference, as to the degree in which a child and a person of mature age are dependent on God in the exercise of their affections. From infancy to old age, man is wholly dependent. He lives and moves and has his being in God. The first movements of his moral nature, which must of necessity be inward affections, have the same relation to the divine agency, as any moral affections afterwards. If God can create a being, who shall at any time be the subject of feelings and actions of a moral nature, or who shall at any time be a free, accountable agent; he can, if he please, create one who shall be a free, moral, accountable agent *from the beginning*. Suppose the first moral feelings and actions of such a being to be sinful; are they not still his own feelings and actions, for which he is justly accountable? With regard to the agency of God, no difficulty attends that moral evil which begins thus early and is therefore called native, more than that which begins at any subsequent period. Or to express it in another form; if God can, consistently with his holiness, create and preserve an intelligent being who shall be a sinner any period of his life, he can create and preserve one who shall be a sinner from the beginning. With respect to the perfections and the agency of God, there appears no difference between the supposition that moral evil begins at the commencement of man's existence, and the supposition that it begins at a subsequent period, unless there is some *intrinsic* absurdity or difficulty in supposing it to begin so early. If there is any such absurdity or difficulty, it must relate to the nature of moral agency. We must then inquire, whether the doctrine of native depravity is inconsistent with a right view of moral agency.

CHAPTER V.

Is the doctrine of native depravity inconsistent with moral agency?

It seems to be frequently taken for granted by Dr. Ware, as well as by Dr. John Taylor and others, that man becomes a moral agent in consequence of an *antecedent* course of voluntary action; and particularly, that he becomes a *sinner* by a course of misconduct which *precedes* his being a sinner. Dr. Ware says, pp. 33, 36, 37, that men become sinners by yielding to temptations — by obeying the impulse of the passions and the calls of appetite, in opposition to the direction of reason and the notices of conscience, — by subjecting themselves to the dominion of the inferior part of their nature, — by the abuse of God's gifts, etc. But does he mean to say, that all this conduct takes place *before men become sinners*, — that they commit sins *before* they are sinners, as well as *after?* Or does he mean that these are the ways in which they transgress the law and manifest and increase their sinfulness? It is doubtless *sin* for men to do the things above mentioned; and in the very act of doing them, whenever it occurs, they are *sinners*.

But the question returns, whether native depravity is inconsistent with moral agency. There is no way to answer this satisfactorily, but by getting clear ideas of moral agency, as well as of native depravity, and then determining, by a careful comparison, whether they are repugnant to each other. What then is moral agency? Or to make the question more convenient, what is *a moral agent?* Answer. A moral agent is one who acts under a moral law, and is justly accountable for his conduct. Now we find it to be the opinion of our author, that "by their natural birth men become *reasonable*, *accountable* beings," which is the same as to become *moral agents*. And if they are moral agents, they are capable of moral action; that is, capable of holiness and sin; as Dr. Ware often represents them to be. But

if they are *capable* of sin, there is no absurdity in supposing that they may actually be the subjects of sin; and that they may be subjects of sin as soon as they are moral agents. In one place, which I have already noticed, Dr. Ware says they are so. In explaining the phrase, "All have sinned," he says it means, "all who are capable of sinning, all *as soon as they are capable of it*, all *as soon as they are moral agents*." If these statements of his are correct, there can be no kind of inconsistency between native depravity and moral agency. Our author seems here to rise to a high point of orthodoxy; for he says, that "all who are capable of sinning, all who are moral agents, are sinners; and that they are sinners *as soon* as they are capable of sinning, or *as soon as they are moral agents;*" and that "they are reasonable, accountable beings," that is, "moral agents," "by their natural birth." By their natural birth all are moral agents, and as soon as they are moral agents they are sinners; *moral agents by nature*, and *sinners as soon as moral agents*. I think this representation of Dr. Ware cannot easily be mended.

This settles the question how children can be capable of depravity at so early a stage of their existence as the orthodox suppose. For if they are moral agents, — that is, "reasonable, accountable beings," — "by their natural birth," as Dr. Ware expresses it, they are of course capable of moral evil — as capable of it at the commencement of their moral existence as at any subsequent period. I speak not here of the *degree* of capability, but of the *reality*. If, at the commencement of moral existence, men are not as really capable of sin as afterwards, it must be because they are not really moral agents. And if they are not really moral agents, it must be because they have not the properties which are essential to moral agency. But Dr. Ware asserts that they have these properties *by nature;* and so he seems to have settled this part of the controversy.

If men, at the beginning of their existence, are not moral agents, we have here nothing to do with them; for the very question, whether they are the subjects of moral evil, manifestly implies that they are moral beings, and capable of moral evil. It is no

part of my object, in this discussion, to determine precisely the time when moral agency begins. Dr. Ware's position is mine, that *men are sinners as soon as they are moral agents.*

If men, at first, have a low degree of moral agency, or a low and feeble degree of those faculties which constitute them moral agents, as we find the case actually is, they can be sinners only in a correspondent degree. This view of the subject appears perfectly reasonable. Men have, for a time, the faculties essential to moral agency, in a small degree. Of course they are, in a small degree, accountable creatures — in a small degree, capable of moral evil; and if they are really sinners, they must be so only in the same degree. According to this view, there must be the same difference between men of mature age and young children, in regard to their sinfulness, as there is in regard to their intellectual and moral powers. In early childhood, there is only the feeble dawn of reason and conscience — the almost imperceptible commencement of the faculties of moral agents — much like the commencement of corporeal powers and corporeal action in infancy. As childhood advances, the light of reason and conscience waxes brighter; the intellectual and moral powers increase. Why may it not be so in regard to moral evil? In early childhood, the small and often imperceptible beginning of sinful affection corresponds to the feeble dawn of reason and conscience, and the incipient state of moral agency. After this, sinful affection and action increase with the increasing strength of the intellectual and moral faculties, till they rise to maturity. Is there anything incredible in this? Is it not confirmed by the appearances of human nature from infancy to mature age, as well as by the representations of Scripture?

But in regard to moral agency, as well as many other subjects, Dr. Ware seems to agree with Dr. John Taylor, who invests his opinions and arguments with such charms of genius and taste, as are found in few writers of any age. Dr. Ware, p. 20, represents man as without either sin or holiness, until he has, by *the exercise of his faculties*, formed a character either good or bad. He must mean an exercise of the faculties which *precedes* the

existence of either sin or holiness. In another place, he represents that *men make themselves sinners;* which, connected as it is, must mean that the exercise of their faculties, by which they *make themselves sinners*, takes place *before* they are in any sense sinful. For it would not be to his purpose to say, that men *make* themselves *sinners* by an exercise of their faculties, after they are sinners; though he might justly affirm that they make themselves *more and more sinful* in that way.

This, then, seems to be Dr. Ware's theory; namely, that men make themselves sinners, or bring themselves into a state of sinfulness, or form a sinful disposition in themselves, by a course of voluntary action which is antecedent to the first existence of sin in them. It is his meaning, that the course of action, by which men make themselves sinners, precedes the first existence of sin in them; because it is his object to account for the fact, that men first become sinners; and we should not expect that he would ascribe the *commencement* of moral evil in mankind to an exercise of their faculties, which takes place *after* that same moral evil exists. His theory, then, is, that before men have any taint of sin, they go through a course of action which results in sin, or by which they make themselves sinners.

The difficulties with which this theory is encumbered I have before hinted at; but they ought to be set forth more particularly and fully.

1. When Dr. Ware speaks of "the exercise of the faculties," he must mean those faculties of moral agents, which he thinks men possess by their natural birth. I ask, then, whether they can exercise those faculties without exercising their moral agency? My next question is, how they can be moral agents, and perform the actions of moral agents, and yet have neither holiness nor sin? If they are moral agents, they are accountable to God. Accountable for what? Why, according to one part of Dr. Ware's scheme, accountable for an exercise of the faculties, which is neither holy nor sinful; not *holy*, for if it were holy, it surely could not be the way in which men "make themselves sinners;" — and not sinful, because, according to this scheme, sin begins to

exist as its *consequence*, not as its attendant circumstance. If, then, this theory is true, moral agents, who are of course accountable to God, are accountable for an exercise of their powers which is neither holy nor sinful. What does such accountableness amount to? Further. If they are moral agents, their actions have a relation to a moral law, and so must be obedience or disobedience. But here is a course of action in moral agents, which partakes neither of obedience nor disobedience. What then is its relation to law? And of what account is it in a moral view?

But I have another question; namely, how can such a course of action, as is supposed by our author, produce the effect attributed to it? How can actions, which *precede* the *existence* of moral evil, and so have in them nothing of the nature of moral evil, tend to produce moral evil as their proper result? Was there ever anything like this in the history of the human mind? The exercise of reason may produce an improvement of reason, or may excite a rational affection. The exercise of any corrupt passion may increase the strength of that passion, and tend to subject the mind to its influence. But who can think, that actions in no degree sinful will produce sin. Why should they produce sin, rather than holiness? Has the mind, in which they exist, any tendency to sin rather than to holiness? But this would be contrary to Dr. Ware's scheme. Does sin, then, rather than holiness, result from those actions by *chance*, that is, without anything in them which can be a cause of this result, rather than of another? If so, then the task still lies on Dr. Ware's hands, of accounting, by some adequate cause, for the first existence of moral evil in the human mind.

The difficulties I have now suggested, though quickly disposed of by men of superficial understanding, will not easily be passed over by those who are accustomed to close and patient investigation. Dr. Ware attributes the first existence of sin in the individuals of our race to a certain course of voluntary action, as its cause. I can well enough perceive that, according to the known laws of the human mind, the exercise of the faculties will strength-

en them, and that any course of voluntary action will increase and confirm those dispositions which it involves. But here is a scheme quite different; not that the faculties of the mind or the moral dispositions acquire strength by exercise, nor that intellectual and moral habits are thus generated or confirmed; but that a course of action, which has not the smallest degree of what is sinful in it, is yet the cause which produces sin, or the very way in which men first *make themselves sinners*. I ask for facts which men have been conscious of in themselves or witnessed in others, to establish this theory. I can indeed readily admit, that children and men may exercise their faculties for some time, before they make a particular disposition which belongs to them, manifest to others. This may be owing to the weakness of the disposition, or to the absence of those causes which would excite it and give it a visible form, or to the influence of causes which lead to a studied concealment. But in all such cases, the disposition exists — actually exists, though it may be invisible. Motives excite it. Exercise strengthens it. Occasions give it form and bring it out to view. But would it not be something which our experience has never taught us, if motives, or occasions, or exercises should produce an entirely *new* disposition or affection, that is to say, one which did not in any sense previously belong to the mind? It is granted, that motives and occasions may produce a new modification of a moral disposition, or a new combination of different dispositions, and in that way may originate a new form of affection, which shall receive a new name; as a man, who has a spirit of selfishness may, at one time, be placed in circumstances which will give his selfishness the form of pride or vanity; at another time, the form of covetousness; at another time, the form of envy or revenge. But the general nature of pride, vanity, avarice, envy and revenge is involved in that selfishness which before lurked in the mind, and which may be considered as the original disposition. In all these cases, there is nothing new in its *nature*. The disposition, which is excited in a course of voluntary action, is one which before existed either in the same form, or in a different one. But our author undertakes to account for the *origin* of a sinful

disposition, by an exercise of the faculties in which that disposition was in no sense involved. Is there any connection between such a cause and such an effect?

Speaking with reference to the origin of sin, Dr. Ware says: "when we have traced back the wickedness of men, as it actually exists, to the voluntary neglect, perversion, and abuse of the nature God has given them, we can go no further." But this is only tracing back the wickedness of men, to itself — wickedness considered generally or in the gross, to wickedness in particular forms. Their corrupt nature is what they have made for themselves, by the neglect, perversion, and abuse of the nature God has given them. But their nature must have been already corrupt, when such *neglect*, *perversion*, and *abuse* took place. These were sins. And one would rather suppose it rational to make a corrupt nature account for these particular sins, than to make these account for that; because, if either precedes the other, and may act as a cause of the other, it is the sinful disposition or corrupt nature, not any particular modes of sinning. Common sense leads us to ascribe particular modes of sinning to a sinful disposition or heart as the source.

Dr. Ware says, "Questions may be asked" upon the statement he makes, "which cannot be answered, because we have not faculties which enable us in any cases to trace things up to the first cause and spring of action." Had Dr. John Taylor, and other writers like him, observed this maxim, they never would have attempted to trace back the existence of moral evil in man to its first cause, and certainly not to such a cause as free-will, or a self-determining power. Because it is obvious, that the particular determinations of the will are prompted and governed by the dispositions or affections of the heart. This is one of the laws of our nature. And if in any case it should cease to be so, our volitions would cease to be either good or bad. This principle is recognized in all the judgments we pass upon the volitions and external actions of men. The moment you decide what was the disposition of heart which gave rise to any particular volitions, you decide the character of those volitions. If, in any case, you are unable to

decide the former, you are of course unable to decide the latter. The prevailing disposition or affection of the heart prompts particular determinations of the will, and satisfactorily accounts for them. For example, the determination of Judas to accept the thirty pieces of silver, and deliver Christ to the rulers, arose from his avarice, and other base motives mingled with it. As long as men are free, they will choose and act according to their inclination.

Our author says, "that man is by nature capable of making a right or wrong choice, and no more inclined to one than the other; that he makes himself a sinner by yielding to temptation and obeying the impulse of passion; that all his wickedness may be accounted for without any native bias to sin; that it may all be but the effect of neglect to restrain appetites in themselves good, to give proper direction to powers designed to be useful, and in general, of a failure to exercise properly, in temptations and trials, the powers of direction and resistance, which were in themselves sufficient." I have already granted that these are ways in which men commit sin; ways in which they act out their depravity. But they sin too by worshipping idols, by taking the name of God in vain, by profaning the Sabbath, by covetousness and revenge. The plain fact is, that the neglect and perversion and abuse of our faculties, yielding to temptation, and the other things which Dr. Ware has mentioned, and all the particular instances of sin, as idolatry, profaneness, covetousness, slander, revenge, etc., *constitute human wickedness.* They make up the amount of man's sin, as the parts of anything, taken together, make up the whole. But these various ways of sinning are not the cause of the depravity of the heart, but spring from it; as our Saviour teaches, Matt. 15: 19, "Out of the *heart* proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." These things *show* the depravity of the heart, but do not *cause* it, nor *account* for it. Name any form of human wickedness, any thought, volition, choice, action, which is sinful; any instance of yielding to temptation: any perversion or abuse of our faculties; and you name that which proceeds from a sinful heart. If it is not so,

then man can commit sin with a sinless heart. The sinfulness of the heart must be resorted to as the fountain of every act of sin, from the commencement of moral agency. If then any one would account for the origin of moral evil in man, he must account for the wrong disposition or sinfulness of heart, which is evidently presupposed in every particular mode of sinning, just as goodness of disposition is presupposed in every act of obedience. My position is, that men have a depravity of heart or proneness to sin *by nature*, and that their original depravity is not the effect of any preceding volition or action in them, nor the effect of any change they undergo after their birth. And in reality, this seems to be taught by Dr. Ware himself in some remarkable passages of his Letters. For he represents all men as moral agents by nature, and sinners as soon as moral agents; and he represents Christians as delivered from the state of wrath in which they had lived *from their birth.*

We have now come to an *ultimate fact.* Man, in the state into which he is born, has a depraved heart, or is inclined to sin. If any one thinks this inconsistent with moral agency, I ask, how it is any more inconsistent with moral agency for man to be a sinner or to be inclined to sin at first, than afterwards. An accountable, moral agent must be blame-worthy for every affection and action which is not conformed to the rule of duty, *whenever* that affection or action takes place. If you deny this, you deny that the rule of duty is just. If you allow this, you allow that sin's commencing at the commencement of man's moral existence does not prevent its ill-desert.

I have wished to dwell upon this point long enough to make it perfectly plain, and to prevent, if possible, the endless repetition of the saying, that man cannot be culpable for anything which he has by nature — for anything which is not the *fruit* or *consequence* of his choice. Nothing, in my view, can be more groundless than this notion. For whenever, and in whatever way, man has what the divine law forbids, or is destitute of what it requires, he is culpable, unless the law itself is in fault.

In regard to the divine agency and the divine goodness, the

theory which I advocate is liable to no more objection than the theory of my opponent. The difficulties attending his theory are obvious to every intelligent man. He holds that human beings are brought into existence in a state where they are exposed to danger. But if there must be danger, why are they not fortified against it? Why are not poor, frail creatures, who have as yet no moral principle to guide them, so aided by divine goodness at the outset, that they shall take a right direction? They are at first, it seems, in a state of perfect equilibrium, inclined neither one way nor the other. Their Maker sees this. He has placed them in this state. Now when they are so weak and so dependent on him, why does he not interpose, and turn the scale in favor of holiness? Why does he leave all, when they first act as moral beings, to act wrong? Why does he expose them to the fatal contagion of sin? And how does it happen that, without any predisposition to evil, they all run into it? The scale equally balanced, without the least tendency one way or the other, always turns the wrong way! And God stands by, and sees it, and lets it be, when a little help from him would prevent! And is there no difficulty in this?

But I wish to show still more particularly, that in regard to God's agency, the scheme of Unitarians is attended with as many and as great difficulties, as that of the orthodox.

The Unitarian scheme doubtless admits a divine agency in dependent beings, so far as it is necessary to their existing and acting, and so far as it is suited to their rational and moral nature. Philosophical Unitarians, who respect the authority of Hartley or Priestley, maintain, as strenuously as any of the orthodox, that all the volitions and actions of men, whether good or bad, result from causes which operate according to the settled laws of our nature; and that those causes are ultimately under God's control, and are made efficacious by his will. To prevent misapprehension, I will here add that the agency which we ascribe to God in the formation and preservation of moral agents, and in the direction of those causes which determine their moral actions, is in many respects very unlike the agency of God in the natural

world. God's forming a moral agent is widely different from his forming a stone or a tree. His giving activity to man and efficacy to the moral causes which operate upon him, is very different from his giving efficacy to the causes which produce the growth of a tree, or the motion of the planets. The influence by which God leads men to act, is an influence not only consistent with their rational moral agency, but is its effectual security. The causes which act upon moral agents, do indeed produce *effects*. But what are those effects but free moral actions, for which those who perform them are justly accountable?

Here I request my opponents candidly to inquire, whether the orthodox theory is involved in any difficulty with respect to the divine agency, from which theirs is free. Is more divine agency necessary to account for moral action in the first stage of our existence, than afterwards? Are not men at all times equally dependent on God? Are not their feelings and actions regulated by the same causes at the beginning of their moral existence, as at any other period? And are they not as really accountable, when they first exist as moral agents, as afterwards. I speak not as to the degree in which they exert their rational powers, or the degree in which they are praise-worthy or blame-worthy; but as to their really exerting their powers, and their being truly accountable. Now how does the theory of native depravity involve any greater difficulty in regard to the divine agency, than any other theory which admits that man is a sinner; inasmuch as the only difference in this respect is, that according to one man begins to be a sinner earlier, than according to the other? Those who assert that men begin to be sinners at a later period, are as much obliged to account for that fact, as we are to account for the fact that men are sinners from the first. The fact which they are to account for is, that men who have been moral agents for some time, and have by the exercise of holiness done something towards forming a habit of holiness, should then become sinners. The task of accounting for this is, to say the least, as hard as that which falls to us. For how is it that the holy affections, which have for some time been acquiring strength by exercise, should, in

every human being, so easily give place to sinful affections? and that a habit, which has attained more or less confirmation, should be so easily overcome? How is it that men can be uniformly induced to sin, by any causes whatever? Are not all the causes which operate upon them, under the direction of the Almighty? Suppose they are drawn aside from duty by temptations arising from external objects. Who is it but God that formed and arranged those objects? And who is it but God that has given man that constitution of body and mind, which exposes him to receive an impression from those objects, and to be drawn aside by their influence? Who is it that places him in such a situation, that those objects acquire so mighty a sway over his feelings and his actions? How easy would it be for that God, who contrives and rules all things, so to direct the circumstances of man, or, in all circumstances, so to influence his mind, that he should never fall into sin? Or suppose he is drawn into sin by his appetites and passions. Who gave him those appetites and passions? And who gave them power thus to influence his conduct? Who gave him a moral constitution so weak, as to be uniformly overcome by such an influence? Or to go back a little further. When God formed the plan of this world, did he not clearly see how the mind of man, placed under the influence of such causes, would operate? Did he not see how it would evolve its powers and its affections; how it would be impressed by other objects; and what would ultimately be its moral state? Did he not form things as they are, with a perfect foreknowledge of the result? Was it possible for him to adopt such a scheme, made up of causes and effects in the moral as well as in the natural world, with any other view, than that the consequences which have actually taken place, would take place? Say, if you please, that man's conduct and character are owing to his own free will. Did not God give him his free will? And when he gave it, did he not know exactly what it was, and how it would operate? And is it not according to his plan, that man's free will is influenced as it is by the various causes which affect it? Should it be said, the will is prompted to act by no motive or cause extraneous to itself; my reply would be,

first, that this would relieve no difficulty in regard to the character and agency of God. For if the will were not actuated by external motives or causes, then we should be under the necessity of concluding that God so constituted the will, that it should be moved to act by *causes within* itself, those causes, and the influence they should have on the mind, being as much dependent on a divine arrangement, as anything else. But I reply, secondly, that as man is in fact constituted, such a supposition is not admissible. Because acts of the will, not prompted by the disposition of the heart, nor by any other motive, could have no moral character. Of this any man may be satisfied who will allow himself to think. Motives are the proximate causes of all voluntary actions; and must be so, or we cease to be moral agents. But are not motives under the divine control?

Now let Dr. Ware clearly show, how the concern which God has with the transgression of his law, at any period of life, can be admitted without dishonor to his character; and I will show how it can be admitted in the case of that early depravity which our doctrine asserts. I insist that a moral depravity existing from the first, involves no greater difficulty respecting the divine agency, than the scheme advocated by our opponents.

The truth of Dr. Ware's declaration, that "we have not faculties which enable us in any cases to trace things up to the first cause and spring of action," I do not admit without some limitation. It is, indeed, true, in all cases where God has not given us sufficient information. But as to the subject now under consideration, God has not left us in such profound ignorance, as seems to be signified by the above cited remark. And it certainly behooves Unitarians to admit candidly, and without fear of consequences, the obvious meaning of those texts which are found in Rom. 5: 12—19, and elsewhere, which expressly account for the universal depravity of mankind by the offence of their common father.*

It is easy enough to account for the moral disorders which pre-

* The passages referred to teach, as plainly as language can teach, that the universal corruption of man is the *consequence*, not of the exercise of his free will, but of the one act of disobedience in Adam.

vail in the world, if the single fact is admitted, that men are actually depraved — that they are sinful by nature. For every body knows that men will act according to their prevailing disposition, and that their disposition is strengthened and confirmed by repeated acts. But the difficulty which it behooves Unitarians to solve is, that intelligent moral beings, coming into existence with a nature perfectly pure, and not in the least inclined to evil, should universally become actual sinners as soon as they are capable of exercising their moral faculties. No act of the *will* can account for this fact. Certainly no *right* act of the will can account for it. And there can be no wrong act of the will before there is a wrong disposition of heart. But if men have a wrong disposition, they are already depraved, and their being so is not to be accounted for by that sinful act of the will which takes place after they become so.

The corrupting influence of bad example is mentioned by Dr. Ware and others, to account for the early and general depravity of mankind. But is this satisfactory? Upon the supposition that men are free from all wrong bias, and perfectly pure, they can have no disposition to follow a bad example, or in the least degree to be pleased with it. And if they have no disposition to follow it, or be pleased with it, it surely cannot injure them. There is no conceivable way in which any bad example, any temptation or solicitation to sin from without, can really be injurious to us, but by meeting with a disposition in us which concurs with it, and draws us into compliance. The power of temptation, whenever it prevails, lies in such a disposition in us. But where such a disposition exists, sin is already begun. Jesus was always perfectly free from any sinful disposition; and therefore no temptation had any effect upon him, but to exercise and confirm his virtue. Temptation never produces its effect upon moral agents, either in a compulsory manner or by chance. They have a propensity, often unperceived by themselves, to the sins which they are tempted to commit. The prevalence of outward temptation to draw them into sin, is always considered a proof that there is something wrong in their disposition which gives efficacy to the

temptation. The Apostle James says, "a man is tempted," that is, temptation prevails, "when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin." Thus he traces actual transgression to the influence of a corrupt disposition or affection in the heart.

The attempt of Dr. John Taylor to account for the corruption of the world by the influence of bad example, is particularly answered by Edwards. The following is a summary of the answer. It is accounting for the corruption of the world by itself. For the universal prevalence of bad examples is the very corruption to be accounted for. If mankind are naturally no more inclined to evil than to good, how comes it to pass that there are, in all ages, so many more bad examples than good ones? Or if there are not more bad ones than good, how is it that the bad are so much more followed? And when opposition has been made by good examples, how comes it to pass that it has had so little effect to stem the general current of wickedness? There have in different ages been examples of eminent piety and goodness; as that of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, of the prophets, apostles, and martyrs, but especially the perfect example of Christ. These examples are constantly held up to view in the Scriptures, and by the ministers of religion, and would surely produce a general effect in Christian lands, were there not a propensity in man to follow bad examples rather than good ones.

Again. The influence of bad example, without corruption of nature, will not account for children's universally committing sin as soon as they are capable of it, especially the children of eminently pious parents.

Several Unitarians have triumphantly repeated of late, what Dr. John Taylor said long ago, that the occurrence of sin in Adam, who is admitted on both sides to have been at first sinless, invalidates the grand argument of the orthodox in proof of *native* depravity.

I acknowledge that the fact referred to throws a difficulty in our way, if we undertake to prove the *native* depravity of man *merely* from the fact, that all who come to adult years commit sin,

separately from other considerations. For if the parent of our race changed from native innocence to sin, we could not, by our own reason, certainly determine, that it would be impossible for others to change in like manner. We must look, then, for evidence, from our own experience and observation, and from the word of God. If we could call to remembrance a period at the commencement of our life in which we were wholly without sin; or if we should learn, by careful observation, that children generally live for a time in a sinless state; or if the Scriptures taught us that such is the state of human beings at the beginning of their life; we should be obliged to admit the original purity of their nature, as we do that of Adam, though they all become sinners afterwards. In regard to Adam, there is clear proof of the fact, that he was, at first, in a state of holiness, and for a time continued in that state. But where is the evidence that such is the first moral state of his posterity? We have abundant evidence of the contrary. Adam's transgressing the divine law implied a *change* of his moral nature from holiness to sin. But respecting his posterity, both experience and the word of God lead us to conclude, that the only essential change they ever experience is from sin to holiness. The two cases, then, are materially different. And we can by no means reason respecting the one, as we do respecting the other. The sin of Adam affords no evidence that his nature was originally corrupt. But the sin of his posterity, *circumstanced as it is*, affords conclusive evidence that they are, from the first, subjects of a corrupt nature. Just as the case may be in bodily diseases. A man may have a consumption, when there is no proof that it is a native disorder. But a consumption in other cases may be attended with circumstances, which prove beyond a doubt that the disorder was founded in the original constitution. Our inquiry is, whether the circumstances of the case prove the disorder to be natural? What I have said, Chapter III, is the substance of the argument, by which I prove the moral depravity of mankind to be *native*. But there is no evidence at all that Adam's depravity was native. I say, then, we cannot reason from one to the other, because the circumstances of the

two are materially different. I do not rely on the mere fact, taken by itself, that mankind are at length all sinners; because if there were any reason to suppose that mankind exist for a time in a sinless state, as Adam did, their being sinners afterwards would not show what their state was originally. It is, however, as true of Adam as of any other man, that every sinful act of his arose from what was wrong in his heart. But who can account, philosophically and satisfactorily, for the first existence of what was sinful in the heart of Adam? The commencement of sin in his case, and in the case of the fallen angels, is to be regarded as an ultimate fact, — a fact, however, perfectly consistent with all the principles and laws of moral agency. But as to man, in his present state, we must consider all his actions, his whole life, as a development of the intellectual and moral nature which he had from the first; because there is no evidence that his nature has undergone a change from holiness to sin.*

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* *Note to the Present Edition.*

The free abridgment which I have judged it proper to make in the foregoing Chapter, has left the main points as they were. One of the chief objects which I aimed to accomplish was, to make it evident that the Unitarian scheme is encompassed with difficulties as numerous and as hard to be satisfactorily disposed of, as the scheme of the orthodox. The metaphysical objections, which have been so confidently urged against the common doctrine of depravity, has, I perceive, induced me to make a more frequent use of metaphysical arguments in defence of the doctrine, than I should think expedient in ordinary cases. And even in regard to the point now under consideration, I am led, after long reflection, to place much less reliance upon the best metaphysical or philosophical reasoning, than upon the texts of Scripture which relate to the subject, and the facts which uniformly occur through the whole life of man. But I must say one thing more. If any person is desirous of avoiding error, and of getting his mind liberated from the disturbing influence of speculative objections and difficulties in regard to original sin and other kindred subjects, and of attaining to an undoubting, strong, quiet faith; let him see to it that his heart is right with God. Let him reverence the divine wisdom and the divine authority, and be ready to submit unreservedly to the divine will. Let him go to the inspired oracles, resolved to believe whatever doctrines God reveals, and to practice whatever duties he enjoins. And let him offer up constant and fervent prayer for the promised influence of the Holy Spirit. Let him do this, and whether he is learned or unlearned, a man or a child, his merciful Father will secure him from the errors which prevail in the world, and will guide him, gradually but surely, into all the truth.

CHAPTER VI.

I SHALL now consider the manner in which Dr. Ware meets several arguments which the orthodox derive from Scripture in support of the doctrine of depravity.

In my Letters I cited Gen. 6: 5, not as a direct, but as an indirect proof of the orthodox doctrine of depravity. My object in quoting this particular passage was, to illustrate the general nature of the argument from the Old Testament. I shall not take time to expose again the objection which Dr. Ware urges against it, as it is the same with that which I particularly noticed in Letter V. Dr. Ware has made no attempt to invalidate the argument on which I chiefly relied for the confirmation of my theory. I had stated, that the Apostle quotes promiscuously from the Old Testament, passages descriptive of the wickedness of mankind formerly, as equally applicable to the human race at all times, and that, if the passages referred to are not applicable to mankind universally, the Apostle has given us sophistry instead of argument. My reasoning on the subject is given at length in my fifth Letter, to which I beg leave to refer the reader. It was the reasoning on which I rested for the truth of my position; and it deserved the attention of Dr. Ware as much as anything I had written. But without any particular attention to my reasoning, he repeats the very objection which I had endeavored to answer. The passage in Gen. 6: 5, he says, "relates not to mankind universally, but to the degenerate race of men of that age, so remarkably and universally corrupt, beyond all that had gone before or have followed since, as to call for the most signal tokens of the vengeance of heaven."

I begin my remarks on this quotation by saying, that there is not the least reason to think, that the men of that age were corrupt beyond all who have appeared since. There is certainly no

evidence of this from the description given of their character; for the Bible contains many a description of human wickedness as dreadful as that. There is no evidence from the fact, that the world was destroyed by a deluge; for God might intend to accomplish some important ends by making such a display of his holy vengeance once, though he might not, on account of equal or even greater corruption, think proper to repeat it. It is clear too, that many portions of the human race have suffered more distressing calamities, and of course more dreadful tokens of the divine vengeance, than being destroyed by a deluge. Besides, there is no probability, from the circumstances of the case, that men, at that early period of the world, and with privileges comparatively small, could be guilty in so high a degree as men often have been since. And, in addition to all this, our Saviour expressly cautions us against inferring the degree of men's wickedness from the evils they suffer in the present life. See Luke 13: 1—5. So that, from the signal tokens of divine vengeance which the contemporaries of Noah experienced, we could not safely conclude that they were corrupt above all others.

This, however, is a point of minor consequence. To invalidate my reasoning, Dr. Ware first remarks, that the text quoted from Gen. 6: 5, "relates not to mankind universally, but to the degenerate race of men of that age." He means by this remark to prove, that we cannot, in any proper sense, apply such passages to mankind generally. I had attempted to show that we can learn what *human nature* is, from the highest descriptions of human wickedness found in the Old Testament; that those descriptions are *substantially* true in relation to all men; not that all men are criminal in the same degree, but that all have the *same nature, the same original propensities, the same ingredients of character.* In all this, he thinks I expressed myself rashly or carelessly. "Are we," he says, much in the manner of Dr. Turnbull, "are we to consider those places which, singled out and distinguished from all others, are expressly declared to have been destroyed for their enormous and incorrigible wickedness, as fair representatives of the usual state and character of the human race? People,

who were ordered to be wholly extirpated for the very purpose of stopping the contagion of their vices, etc.? Are Pharaoh, Jeroboam, and Judas, fair examples and representatives of human nature?" I answer, yes. For had they any nature but the *human?* If they were not examples of *human* nature, of what nature were they examples? — of some nature above the human, or below it? The actions of an individual man always result from his own nature, influenced as it is by external causes. But his own nature is *human* nature. And have not others the same? And admitting the moral nature of men to be the same, may we not satisfactorily account for the variety of characters among them, from the different circumstances in which they are placed, and the different combination of causes under which they act? Or are we to resort to the strange supposition, that all the different degrees of wickedness which men exhibit, are really to be traced back to a corresponding difference in their original character? That is, are we to suppose that Pharaoh, Jeroboam, and Judas had originally a moral nature as much worse than Moses, David, and Paul, as their ultimate characters were worse? Nothing could be more unphilosophical, nothing more contrary to the word of God and the common sense of Christians.

Now just try the correctness of the principle which Dr. Ware's reasoning involves; namely, that the account which the Bible gives of the wickedness of men, at one period or in one country, does not make a fair display of *human nature*, and does not show what is substantially the character of men, at any other period or in any other country. If this principle is correct, of what use to us are the writings of historians, either sacred or profane? It has generally been held up by the best writers, as a peculiar advantage of history, that it gives us useful lessons respecting *human nature*, or makes us acquainted with the character of our species. But if Dr. Ware is right, this cannot be admitted. For according to his opinion, history only gives us a description of the passions, dispositions, and conduct of particular men, or societies of men, who had no common nature with us, and to whom we bear no moral likeness. We may read of the envy and malice of Cain;

but it is of no use to us, as it cannot be supposed that men at present have any tendency in their nature to envy and hate others who are better than they. And when the Apostle John referred to the conduct of Cain, for the purpose of counselling and warning those to whom he wrote; he must have done it inadvertently, unless there happened to be something in their character which was different from what was common. History may tell us of the great corruption and violence of the antediluvian world. But at this day we can have little concern with what was so distant, except to gratify curiosity. For it would be very unreasonable to suppose that there is anything in men generally, especially in those who are born in a Christian land, which would lead them into the same excesses, even if they should be placed in the same circumstances. We may read the history of the children of Israel in Egypt, at the Red Sea, at Sinai, in the wilderness, and in the promised land, and our astonishment may be excited at their fickleness, unbelief, ingratitude, and obduracy. But what is all this to us, who live in these better days, who are born Christians, and who cannot, with the least degree of justice, be charged with any disposition or tendency in our nature like theirs? Admit that they were fickle, unbelieving, ungrateful, and obdurate. Does that show what *we* are, or what we should be likely to be in similar circumstances? "Would you go to a lazar-house or hospital, to know what is the usual state of human health?" And what shall we think of the Apostle to the Romans, who says, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning;" and who actually uses the passages of the Old Testament which were descriptive of the wickedness of the Israelites at particular times, as applicable to men generally. — History tells us of the ambition, despotism, and cruelty of wicked kings and commanders. But are men, holding similar stations now, to be suspected of any propensity to similar vices? Indeed, as the moral constitution of different parts of the human species, or the basis of their character, is not the same; no individual can be presumed to have anything like what appears in any other. If I see some of my neighbors proud, selfish, envi-

ous, revengeful, in willing servitude to their passions; I am not warranted to conclude that any others have similar traits of character. Those few men may be the only ones in a whole nation, who have their nature so infected. Of the thousands and millions of their contemporaries, supposing them placed under the influence of the same external circumstances, there may not be a single individual, who possesses radically the same dispositions. And even if it should be found, that they all have substantially the same traits of character, that they all show themselves in a higher or lower degree proud, selfish, envious, revengeful, slaves to their passions; still I am not to suppose that they have previously any likeness of moral nature, which occasions this likeness of visible character. It may be quite an accidental thing, or it may be owing to some unfortunate motion of free-will, happening to be the same in all, that they have come to be subject to the same corrupt passions. It is very certain that the sinful conduct of individuals, or of a nation, or of the whole world from generation to generation, does not show what the nature of man is. The conduct of the antediluvians does not show this, nor the conduct of heathen nations, nor of the Israelites, nor of Christendom generally. Indeed there is no common nature among men. Human nature in one may have no substantial likeness to human nature in another; and what is said truly of some cannot be in any sense safely applied to others. The description which was given of men in the Psalms and in the Prophets, cannot be a true description of other generations or societies of men. And when the Apostle, Rom. iii, applied what had been said of men in seasons of uncommon corruption, to the generality of those who lived in his day, did he not do it rashly? Or if he actually knew that the whole multitude, on whom he heaped the reproaches contained in that chapter, were so uncommonly depraved as to deserve them; it would still be the height of injustice to suppose they are deserved by men in general at the present day. And according to the same scheme, there is not one of all the declarations of the Bible respecting human corruption and guilt, which can be safely

applied to the men of this generation. For those declarations, whatever appearance of universality some of them may have, were all made with a view to men who lived in times very distant from the present, and exhibited a grossness of character now seldom found. The Apostle Paul declared the carnal mind to be enmity against God, and represented the Ephesian converts as having been enemies to God. But it was a carnal mind which existed and yielded its hateful fruits at that particular time. Who will be so uncandid as to look upon the bulk of mankind now, especially in Christian lands, as having that carnal mind which is enmity against God? We find also that Christ said, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh," and on the ground of human corruption thus expressed, asserted the necessity of regeneration. But he must have said it with reference to that carnal race of men, by whom he was surrounded. Of those who are born among us now, it cannot be said that they are *flesh* in any such sense, as implies the necessity of being born again; any more than David's singular acknowledgment that he was "shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin,"—made in very peculiar circumstances, and under grest depression of spirits, can be understood as signifying anything in regard to the native character of men generally. The Bible contains commands, exhortations and warnings to saints and sinners, which were occasioned by the depravity of their hearts, and referred directly to their sinful passions and habits. But such commands, exhortations and warnings may be altogether inapplicable to us, on account of our exemption from that depravity which would render them suitable. The Apostle says; "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature." He says all this of those Christians who lived in his day. To them it properly related. But it cannot be supposed essential to the character of the present generation of Christians, that they should be the subjects of any such change. Indeed we must go still further. To give consistency to the system, on the ground of which these remarks have proceeded, we must maintain that we are under no obliga-

tion to obey the commands of the *decalogue*. For to whom did God speak, when he said, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me; thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image; thou shalt not take the name of God in vain: remember the Sabbath day," etc.? Did he not speak to those particular persons who then surrounded the holy mount? Is it said or intimated, that men of future ages would come under the obligation of these strict and holy commands? Has God ever spoken particularly to us, and required us to observe the precepts of the decalogue? What authority then have the ministers of religion to urge the high obligation of these precepts upon us, just as though God had actually spoken to us in these last days, and given us commands, as he did the Israelites encamped at the foot of Sinai? Surely when they do this, they overlook the vast difference between us who live in an age of such intellectual and moral refinement, and the posterity of Jacob, at that time in so uncultivated a state, and just let loose from "the house of bondage." We cannot look to any of the commands which God gave *them*, to learn what he requires of *us*. Even supposing that, by the authority of prophets and apostles, they were enjoined on other generations of men who came after; where is the prophet or apostle, who has expressly declared that men, living in the nineteenth century, and in this particular part of the world, would all be under obligation to obey those very commands which were enjoined upon men thousands of years ago? The same as to the New Testament. Jesus said, *repent*. But he said it to his *contemporaries*, not to *us*. He said too, "He that believeth shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned." But that awful alternative was pressed upon that generation of Jews, not upon *us*. And in fact, all parts of the Bible were addressed to men of other times, and in other circumstances; and there is no doctrine contained in it respecting the present state or future prospects of men, how true soever it might have been when first declared, which can be assumed as true and applicable now; and no command, however just and important in relation to those to whom it was first addressed, which can bind us; and no warn-

ing of danger, however alarming once, which can properly alarm us; and no promise of good, however cheering and animating once, which can cheer and animate us. The whole Bible, as really as that part which describes human corruption, was spoken and written in other times, and to another race of men; and nothing short of a new revelation can convince us, that the book can be of any practical use to us, except to inform us what the inhabitants of the world once were, and how God once treated them.

I hope to be excused for exhibiting at such length what seems plainly implied in the system which has here come under notice, and what are its legitimate consequences. The principle, on which that system sets aside the descriptions of human depravity contained in the Bible as not in any way applicable to us, would, if closely adhered to, lead on to all the extremities above suggested. It would set aside one part of the Bible, as well as another. The same principle, which would free us from the mortification of applying to ourselves the charges of corruption and guilt contained in the Bible, would also deprive us of its merciful promises. If any man who sets aside the account of human wickedness found in the Scriptures as in no way applicable to us, still thinks the moral precepts applicable, I ask on what principle such an application is founded? Is there any express declaration in the Scriptures themselves, that the moral precepts which were given thousands of years ago, are to be thus understood? No. In what way then are we satisfied, that every human being is under the same obligation to obey the moral precepts of the Bible, as if God actually addressed them to him in particular? How is it that we immediately conclude that all men now living are proper subjects of the same law which God gave to men in former times, and feel it to be right for us to enjoin it upon them to love God supremely, and to keep all the precepts of the Bible? When the ministers of Christ go to pagan nations, how is it that they feel themselves authorized to do just what the apostles did, — to call upon all men to repent, and to worship the true God? What could render all this proper, but the obvious principle that, as to the essential

properties of moral agents, men in all ages and climates are alike? Whenever we meet a human being, we instantly take it for granted that he is a moral agent like ourselves, and like those who first received the law, and that the law is as suitable to him as it was to them. When we see an infant, we take it for granted that he is born to be a moral agent, and that it will be proper to inculcate the divine precepts upon him, as soon as he can understand them; as proper as though the divine Lawgiver expressly directed us to inculcate them upon that particular child. To this the opposers of orthodoxy would readily agree. But it is upon the same general principle that I proceed in my reasoning, with respect to the subject under discussion. There is as real evidence that men in all ages and climates are alike in regard to the essential traits of *moral character*, as in regard to the properties which constitute them proper subjects of law. This is in truth the practical judgment of men universally. Who doubts that a man, whom he now for the first time meets, will exhibit the same characteristics as other men — the same *substantially*, though perhaps not in form? The man whom we never saw before, we doubt not has pride, and that in circumstances which are likely to occur, he will show pride. We doubt not he has a culpable self-love, which will lead him, in a manner not to be justified, to prefer his own interest to that of others. We doubt not he has a tendency to resent an injury, to recompense evil for evil, and to envy those above him. If in any case we should regulate our conduct towards particular men upon any other principle, than that they are subject to the same corrupt affections with others, and that, acting under the influence of similar causes, they are likely to exhibit similar traits of character, we should be justly charged with being deficient in the knowledge of our own species. And if any man thinks *himself* exempt from the moral depravity which men have generally exhibited, and forms his judgment in regard to himself on the principle, that he has little or none of the wickedness which has disgraced and ruined others, he gives conclusive proof of self-ignorance.

Dr. Ware tells us, what indeed deserves special attention, that the very passages of Scripture which represent men as universally

corrupt, "teach us with what qualifications they are to be understood." He refers particularly to Psalm xiv., and says, "that while it asserts in the strong language of emotion and eastern hyperbole, that all are gone aside, — that there is none that doeth good, *no, not one;* it goes on to speak of a generation of the righteous." I might mention it as a fact of the same kind, that an exception was made in favor of Noah, Lot and others, who lived in the midst of abounding wickedness. And the orthodox make such an exception now. When they understand the language of the Bible, which was descriptive of the great wickedness of men formerly, as expressive of the universal depravity of those who live at the present day, they have no doubt there are exceptions — many good men who obey God and are entitled to the happiness of heaven. The question is, how these two representations of Scripture can consist together, and in what manner we are to modify the sense of the one by the other. Here we come to the chief principle of interpretation, namely, that *the Bible, taken as a whole, must explain itself.* How then does the Bible account for the fact that some men are holy, while the generality are sinful? Does it ever represent them to be holy *by nature?* No. It may in some places speak of their being holy as a matter of fact simply, without assigning the cause of it. But in other places it does, with the greatest explicitness, account for this fact. It represents the children of God as being holy, in consequence of regeneration. It teaches them to ascribe their holiness to the new-creating Spirit of God, while it represents their natural character to be like that of others, and describes it in the same language. So that the exception made in their favor does not respect their native character, but the new character which they possess in consequence of being *born of the Spirit.* The principle I am contending for may be easily illustrated by natural things. It may be said of the thorn-bush, that it bears no useful fruit; although in consequence of a scion being ingrafted into it, it may bear fruit that is delicious and salutary. Still the proper nature of the shrub, and the just description of it, remain the same; and we never think of representing it as a property of the thorn-bush,

that it bears delicious fruit. Thus in the passages above referred to, the universal terms which describe human wickedness, instead of being limited as Dr. Ware proposes, are truly applicable to all men without exception, *in regard to their own proper, original character*. Those who are now Christians are naturally subjects of the same depravity with others; and their being different now is owing to "the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost."

Here we are furnished with an easy answer to some of Dr. Ware's questions. "Let it be asked," he says, "why the cruelty and obstinacy of Pharaoh, rather than the humanity, and piety and meekness of Moses; why the idolatry, and unprincipled ambition and selfishness of Jeroboam, rather than the piety, and tenderness of conscience, and public spirit of Josiah; why the single wretch who was so base as to betray his master, rather than the eleven who were true and faithful to him, should be selected as specimens of the race to which they belong?" The answer is, that all these vices and iniquities are the natural, spontaneous growth of human nature. They are what the Apostle calls "the fruits of the flesh;" — of that flesh which, according to John 3: 6, belongs to us by our natural birth; while the virtues enumerated are the fruits of the Spirit, or the effects of that divine influence, by which men are delivered from their natural character and made new creatures. Those men are justly selected as specimens of the race to which they belong, who are just what their own proper nature makes them, or whose traits of character result from their own moral nature, unchanged by the Spirit of God. But it would be obviously unjust to select, as specimens of our race, or of the moral character which properly belongs to us, those who are what they are, not by nature, but by the new-creating Spirit of God. And if the Bible is made its own interpreter, this must be allowed to be fact with regard to every human being who is the subject of holiness. But the case which Dr. Ware afterwards brings into view, is altogether different. He asks, "would you select the period of seven years' famine as an example of the usual fertility of Egypt? The desolating pestilence in the days of David,

as a fair specimen of the salubrity of the climate of Israel?" I answer, no. Because the famine does not show the proper character of the soil of Egypt, nor the pestilence, of the climate of Israel. They were real exceptions to what was natural; and Dr. Ware cannot justly adduce them, as he does, unless he can show that depravity is as foreign to the moral nature of man, as the famine was to the soil in one case, and the pestilence to the climate in the other.

CHAPTER VII.

Dr. Ware is convinced that the universal necessity of regeneration, asserted in John 3: 3, may consist with original innocency. Still, in his apprehension, the passage implies "the absence or want of that which was necessary to becoming a subject of the kingdom of God;" p. 41; or as he expresses it, p. 42, "that men do not possess by birth that character of personal holiness which is necessary to their being Christians." Let the reader consider a moment the consistency between this and what is found in other places. Here, he says of all who are born into the world in every age, that they are by birth destitute of that holiness which is necessary to their being Christians. But soon after, p. 47, he affirms, that "those now born into the world in Christian lands, are as the Ephesians were after their conversion to Christianity, saved — quickened — fellow-citizens of the saints." According to one place, men by their birth receive no moral character. According to another, they are destitute of that which is necessary to their becoming subjects of God's kingdom. And according to a third, "Jews and Gentiles were by nature what they were *before* they became Christians." But here men are Christians by birth. In that very state in which they are born,

instead of being as before described, without a moral character of any kind, they have a character that is good. Instead of wanting that which is necessary to their becoming subjects of the kingdom of God, they are by their birth, of the household of God, fellow-heirs with the saints. Instead of being by their birth destitute of holiness, they are subjects of holiness, quickened, sanctified, as the Ephesians were *after* they became Christians. Little children or infants, generally, instead of being mere human beings, without any disposition or propensity whatever, "are what men are to become by regeneration."

I hope the reader will not be inclined to attribute these contradictions to the fault of Dr. Ware's understanding, but rather to the fault of the system which he has the misfortune to defend. A man like him would not expose himself in this manner, if his cause did not mislead him. Let us however proceed to a few more observations on the subject.

According to Dr. Ware's statements, it would seem that the circumstances of our birth have an astonishing and mysterious efficacy as to the formation of moral character. Those who are born in Christian lands are, *by birth*, what the converted Ephesians were, — *Christians*, *children of God*, *heirs of heaven*. But the moment you pass the line which bounds Christendom and enter a pagan land, you find it quite different. There, in consequence of an arrangement of divine providence, in which human beings could have no agency and over which they could have no power, they are born without any moral disposition, and of course are destitute of that holiness which is necessary to their being admitted into Christ's kingdom; so that it is plainly necessary that they should be born again, — should undergo "a great moral change," and form "a new character." Here in Christendom, it is not so. Either the moral atmosphere of a Christian land, or the character and privileges of parents, or some other causes have so salutary an influence upon the birth of children, that they possess, as soon as they are born, the character of converts. They are sanctified, quickened, and members of God's household, by their natural birth. So that, in regard to them,

regeneration is not necessary. They are as good by their first birth, as the Ephesians were after they were "born again." Now we should be much indebted to Dr. Ware, if he would tell us by what arguments he supports such an opinion as this. He makes it a subject of strong affirmation. Referring to the description of the converted Ephesians, he says: "All this language was applied to the Ephesians universally after their conversion, and *all of it is as applicable now universally to those who are Christians by birth.*" We receive his affirmation as showing clearly what his opinion is. And this no doubt is all he would ask us to do.

Dr. Ware considers the whole passage, Rom. v, as so intricate and obscure, that it can afford no solid support to any doctrine, further than it is explained by other passages; and he seems to think I must view it in this light. I did indeed say that the passage is "*in some respects* very obscure." And so it may be, though in other respects it is very clear. It is surely nothing uncommon, either in inspired or uninspired writings, that a passage should contain a particular doctrine with perfect plainness and certainty, while its import, in regard to some other points, can hardly be ascertained. Such in many instances is the nature of the subject, that while, in some parts it is plain and obvious, in other parts it is necessarily obscure. The passage, Rom. 5: 12 — 21, does, in my view, teach an important Christian doctrine very plainly and fully, and in language which seems not capable of being misconstrued. The writer declares his main doctrine again and again. He declares it in a great variety of forms, and with great strength of expression. He treats his principal subject as though he was determined in that one passage, to make it so plain, that no man could ever be at any loss respecting it. And would not the opposers of orthodoxy consider any passage in this light, if it should teach, in the same clear, diversified, and forcible manner, some doctrine in their creed? Dr. Ware pleads the different meanings of the phrase *Εφ' ὡ*, translated, *for that*, as a reason why we should not attach much consequence to the passage. I will only say, that the signification of the phrase, which is given in the common version, and which is supported by the best expositors, sustains our scheme.

I have no objection, as I have before suggested, to the manner in which Dr. Ware proposes to limit the sense of the assertion, that *all have sinned.* He says, it is the assertion of a fact which none will deny; and that, all circumstances being taken into view, it must mean, "all who are capable of sinning, all as soon as they are moral agents." I presume Dr. Ware would not undertake to determine at what precise period human beings become moral agents. If he should undertake this, we might expect him to determine it, as he seems already to have done in his Letters, where he says that men are moral agents by their birth. Speaking, p. 21, of what men are by nature, he represents them as accountable beings, capable of right and wrong, that is, moral agents. He asserts nearly the same thing, p. 41. These passages, understood according to the fair import of the words, teach as much as any friend of orthodoxy believes, namely, that *all men are sinners as soon as they are born.* I beg the reader to review and compare the passages to which I have referred, and see whether I have not given the just result of Dr. Ware's own representations. And if he does indeed entertain these views, we should suppose he might be relieved from the difficulty he feels, in conceiving that Adam's posterity should be subjected to death and other sufferings, as penal evils, without admitting that they are charged with the sin of another. See his Letters, p. 43. He says, "if this clause (all have sinned) be understood in a sense which shall prove anything to the purpose, it will prove the genuine old Calvinistic doctrine, the imputation of Adam's sin." But in the course of his discussion, he makes it prove something to the purpose, without any regard to that doctrine. We have seen his representation to be, that all are sinners as soon as they are capable of sin, or as soon as they are moral agents, and that they are reasonable, accountable beings, or moral agents, by their birth. The conclusion from these premises must be, that they are sinners, or sinful moral agents, by their birth. And if they are sinners, then obviously death and other evils which they suffer, may be *penal* evils, without their being literally charged with Adam's sin. I do not admit that men are sinners by the sin of Adam in such a

sense, that they suffer *directly for his sin, they themselves being free from moral evil.*

Dr. Ware makes much of man's having a natural or communicated power to resist his sinful propensities, and to be otherwise than what he is. Now in regard to man's natural power, our notions are probably as high as Dr. Ware's. We conceive man's natural power, understood in its literal, proper sense, to be always commensurate with his obligation. There can be no duty without it, and none beyond it.*

I hope Dr. Ware will reconsider what he has written respecting a propensity to sin; namely, "that the propensity itself is no sin, and implies no guilt." Every man must decide, and does decide, that a propensity, inclination, or disposition to sin, is the very essence of sin, and the only thing which makes any outward action or any volition sinful. Before we impute real blame to a man for any action, we either know, or take it for granted, that he has a wrong disposition or propensity. And in regard to ourselves; if, in any case where our actions appear exceptionable in the view of man, we are conscious of no bad disposition or inclination, we charge ourselves with no real guilt. But how fair soever our actions may appear to man, if we are conscious of being governed by a sinful disposition, we condemn ourselves — we condemn ourselves for the disposition itself, as being the essence of sin.

In connection with this subject, Dr. Ware makes one representation of Calvinism, on which I must briefly remark. He says, p. 50: "If I rightly understand the scheme of Calvinism, divine punishments are not, according to that scheme, disciplinary, but vindictive. God punishes his offending creatures, not to reform them but to vindicate his authority. The sufferings of

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* *Note to the Present Edition.*

Instead of republishing here the whole of the above paragraphs as they were, I choose to give them a very abridged form, and to refer the reader to my Lectures, Vol II, where I state at large my more mature opinions on the subject of original sin, imputation, and man's natural power; and show, as clearly as possible, what I regard as the teachings of the inspired writers.

the wicked have no tendency to reform," etc. But this is not a just account of Calvinism, unless the remarks are understood to relate exclusively to *future* punishment. So far as my information extends, all Calvinists, whether higher or lower, consider the sufferings of the present life not only as tending to vindicate the character and law of God, but as *disciplinary*, that is, as having a real tendency, under the dispensation of mercy, to reform the wicked; a tendency which is in many cases effectual, and which would be so in all cases, were it not counteracted by other causes. In respect to this subject, the Scripture leads us to make a clear distinction between the state of probation, and of retribution. In the former, the evils which God inflicts on men are corrective, or disciplinary, though at the same time suited to show God's justice and to vindicate his authority. In the latter state, as we understand the word of God, the reformation of the wicked does not come within the design of punishment. The end to be secured relates wholly to the divine character and kingdom. But we cannot accede to Dr. Ware's notion, that *disciplinary* punishment may be inflicted by a righteous and benevolent God, without real ill desert in those who suffer. Is not disciplinary punishment intended for correction and reformation? But what place can there be for *correction* or *reformation* in those who are not faulty? What need of reformation? And what occasion for correction? Suppose punishment is laid upon them. How can it produce any good effect? In order to be salutary, it must relate to some fault, some moral evil, and must express the divine displeasure on account of it. Where this is the case, there is correction; and if the subjects are not refractory, there will be reformation.

Our author thinks that the scheme of Unitarians, on the subject of depravity, is suited to produce much greater humility and self-abhorrence, than that of the orthodox. Those who are familiarly acquainted with what the advocates of Unitarianism and of orthodoxy have written on the subject of human corruption, and with the views they respectively entertain as to the proper estimate of our own character, must, I think, be surprised at this opinion of Dr. Ware. The truth is, Unitarians have constantly

complained, that the orthodox make too low an estimate of human virtue; that they indulge too debasing views of human nature, and paint the wickedness of their species in too strong colors. At the same time, Unitarians of an independent, liberal judgment, like Dr. Priestley, have freely acknowledged the tendency of our doctrine of depravity, erroneous as they think it, to promote deep humility. And I have been greatly mistaken, if the repugnancy of the doctrine to the *pride* of the heart has not occasioned one chief objection against it. Dr. Ware indeed says: "We certainly have no cause to feel ourselves humbled under a sense of anything we are *by nature*." But he says it incautiously. For whatever he may think of those born in Christian lands; he hesitates not to allow that the Ephesians "were *by nature* children of wrath;" that is, sinful, and deserving of wrath. Was not this a cause for humility in them? The foundation of Dr. Ware's misapprehension must be, that he considers *native* sinfulness to be, in its essential properties, different from the sinfulness exhibited in our life; whereas the one is the commencement of our sinfulness, and the other the continuance and increase of it. "Humility and self-condemnation," Dr. Ware says, "should spring only from the consciousness of a course of life not answering to the powers, and faculties, and privileges of our nature." Now which should be the occasion of greater humility and self-condemnation to a man, the consciousness that such a course as this has extended through a part of his life, or that it has extended through the whole of it? Dr. Ware and other writers distinguish *native* wickedness from *active*, *voluntary* wickedness. But may not that which is *native* be as *active* and *voluntary* as that which gets into the mind afterwards? If man began to exercise love to God at his first existence, surely our opponents would not, on that account, consider it any the less excellent and worthy of approbation. Let any one read what Dr. Ware has written respecting that gratitude, that love of truth, that kindness, and those other dispositions and tendencies to good, which he represents as *native* properties of man, and see whether there is the least appearance of his considering them any the less amiable or praise-worthy on

that account. Why, then, should bad dispositions, or tendencies to evil, which are natural, be for that reason considered as less odious and blame-worthy? Dr. Ware has no difficulty in representing men who are born in Christian lands, as having, by their birth, just what the Ephesians had after their conversion; that is, religion, holiness. But where does he intimate that their holiness is less estimable, because it is a *native* property?

Our author seems fond of saying and of repeating, that our doctrine ascribes human wickedness to the agency of God; that it traces sin to that constitution which was given us by our Creator, etc. But though all this were admitted, even in the offensive terms he uses, the difficulty would not be a whit greater than what attends his system. He says, that human beings, created innocent and pure, afterwards fall into sin by their own choice, and in the exercise of their own free agency. Now if there is any truth in Philosophy or Revelation, it can be proved that their falling into sin, at any period of their life, is a thing as really to be ascribed to the agency of their Maker, or to the constitution he has given them, as *native* sinfulness. For suppose, according to Dr. Ware's scheme, that a man, influenced by strong temptation, at any time falls into sin. Who gave him a constitution of mind fitted to be wrought upon by temptation? And who ordered things so, that he should be exposed to temptation, and to those particular temptations, which prevail to draw him into sin? Did not God know the result beforehand? Was it not a result which naturally flowed from causes, which God directed and controlled, operating upon a moral nature which he created, and according to laws which he established? The question I would ask him to solve is, how, in such a case, there can be any blame? I am far from saying that no difficulty attends the scheme of native depravity in this respect. But the difficulty is, in my view, no greater than what attends any other scheme.

But I must check my inclination to pursue this metaphysical mode of reasoning; though I have an apology in the metaphysical nature of the arguments to be confuted. I will just add, that the

habit of attributing moral evil to God in such a way as to destroy or diminish its criminality, is, in my view, one of the worst habits of which the human mind is capable. It produces alarming stupidity of conscience and hardness of heart, and leads to the most destructive fatalism.

CHAPTER VIII.

As to the *practical importance* of the subject of native depravity, any man may be satisfied, who will maturely consider what connection it must have with our general views of Christian truth and piety. It is not enough to say, that the denial of the original, native corruption of man does *in fact* go in company with such and such notions of Christianity. It may be shown, that the connection which exists in fact is not accidental, but arises directly from the nature of the subject. If we believe that our moral disease results from our moral constitution, — that it is inwrought in our very nature ; we shall surely have different views of the remedy that is necessary, from what we should have if we considered our disease as merely accidental, or as less deep and radical. Just as it is in regard to a bodily disease. If it is a slight, superficial disorder, which first appeared but yesterday, or which has appeared but a few times, the original constitution being sound and vigorous ; we have little concern. Some gentle remedy will be sufficient to remove it ; or perhaps it will shortly disappear of itself. But if the disease is rooted in our constitution ; if it began to show itself very early, and evidently results from our original structure, especially if there is evidence of its being hereditary ; it becomes an alarming case. Some powerful remedy is necessary ; something that will effect a great and salutary change in our very constitution. If this cannot be had, we

despair of a thorough cure. In like manner, those who seriously believe themselves and others to be the subjects of a native and entire depravity, must be convinced, that a mighty operation of divine power is necessary to make them holy. Passing by human efforts, and all slight remedies, as totally inadequate, they must found every hope of moral purification on that energy of God, which gives men a new heart and a new spirit, — which creates them in Christ Jesus unto good works. Though they have been born in a Christian land; though they have enjoyed the best instruction, and witnessed examples of the greatest purity; though distinguished by the most correct habits, by the most useful actions, and by the highest improvement of their rational powers and natural sensibilities; and though applauded for their virtues by those who look only on the outward appearance; yet, while unrenewed, they find in themselves that corruption of heart, which is the fountain of all iniquity; and they find the utter want of that holiness, without which no man can see the Lord. The disease of their nature — the earthly, selfish, unholy disposition which has from the first borne sway in their hearts, spoils the beauty of their fair exterior, lays them low in the dust, and brings them to rely solely on the purifying grace of God. They have a strong, humbling conviction, that, amiable and excellent as their character may appear to others, they must be saved, if saved at all, *by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.* Through their whole course, their religious feelings and duties are materially affected by their belief of the radical, native depravity of their hearts. While sensible of this deep-rooted evil of their nature, they suffer no proud self-complacency to possess their minds. New reasons constantly occur for self-distrust and self-abhorrence. In a greater or less degree, the fountain of evil still remains within them. They never account themselves to have attained complete victory over sin. They have perpetually an inward warfare, and, in every part of their warfare, they confide in that divine grace, which gives purity and strength to the soul. In their latest moments they deplore that obstinate, hateful malady of their nature, which has so long kept

up its resistance to the best means of cure; and, with their dying breath, they cry for the Spirit of God to complete their sanctification, and fit them for the presence of him whom their soul loveth.

Consider, now, how different are the views of those who deny the native corruption of man, and believe him to be originally pure; and how different the whole aspect of their religion. On this subject, I would gladly excuse myself from saying what the case seems to require; because my controversy is with a man, whose talents and office I would treat with invariable respect, whose coolness of judgment and sobriety of character I wish to copy, and whose candor, civility, and kindness towards me I am most cordially disposed to reciprocate. I trust it will be well understood, that my animadversions relate not to him personally, but to the system which he has undertaken to unfold and vindicate. What, then, is the scheme of practical religion, with which the denial of innate depravity is associated? If I believe, as a general truth, "that young children are what men are to become by regeneration;" that is, if I believe them to be subjects of real holiness; if I believe that all who are now born into the world in Christian lands are already "saved by the grace of God, and fellow-citizens with the saints;" I must treat them accordingly. I must treat them as persons who have no need of conversion, or of the grace of God to effect it, inasmuch as they are born Christians, and already possess the character of converts. And if at any time I seem to see some mark of depravity common to children, I must apologize for it, and soothe their feelings by telling them, it can "fairly be traced to causes which imply no degree of depravity, and no fault of character or disposition;" so that they have no occasion for uneasiness. And if I address sinners at large, either in public or in private, instead of depicting their guilt, as the inspired writers do, and laboring to make them feel that they are dead in trespasses and sins and under the wrath of God; I must not hesitate to say to them, as our author does, "that as much as there is of wickedness and vice, there is far more of virtue and goodness; — that wickedness, far from being

the prevailing part of the human character, makes but an inconsiderable part of it." And if I ever have occasion to speak to men of the worst character, — to liars, thieves, adulterers, blasphemers, men of revenge and blood, infidels, atheists, — I must soothe *their* feelings too, not by persuading them to apply to that blood which cleanseth from all sin — not by pointing them to mercy higher than the heavens, but by so far forgetting the word of God as to tell them, "that even in the worst of men, good feelings and principles are predominant;" and that, as "the greatest liar" may comfort himself with the idea, that "he speaks many truths to every lie he utters;" so other monsters of wickedness should not deprive themselves of the satisfaction of believing, "that in the course of their lives they perform many more good than bad actions." And if I am to carry such a flattering message to "the worst of men," with what sincere congratulations must I address myself to the generality? As to men who are destitute of holiness, enemies to God, dead in sin, men whose imaginations and desires are only evil, and who are ready to perish, — none can be found among us. Through the healing influence of being born in Christian lands, another race of men has sprung up, saints by nature, of the household of faith by their first birth, to whom it would be altogether superfluous to be born again of the Spirit of God.

If men transgress the rules of morality, I must indeed tell them they are sinners, and urge them to repent. But here is the difference. If I am duly impressed with the common doctrine of depravity, I shall endeavor to convince them, whether old or young, not only of the impropriety and guilt of the particular acts of sin they have committed, but of the corrupt principle, the depravity of heart, from which those acts have proceeded, and from which, if it remain, sinful acts will continue to proceed; and to show them, that it is not more evidently their concern to repent of the particular sins committed, than it is to be renewed in the spirit of their minds. I shall take occasion, from what they have actually done, to turn their thoughts within, and lead them to feel that the word of God does indeed address them, when it says,

"ye must be born again." As to any repentance or reformation short of this, I shall assure them it will avail nothing.

These are cutting, humbling truths, marring the beauty of all external virtue, where the heart retains its native alienation from God. They make the great force of that conviction which the Holy Spirit produces, to relate to that inbred, entire depravity of the heart, which is the subject of this controversy. Thus the doctrine, as I have exhibited it, is a practical truth, confirmed by Christian experience. They who, being thoroughly illuminated by the Spirit of God, judge themselves by the divine law, and receive salvation by grace, are as really convinced of this doctrine by their own experience, as by the plainest declarations of Scripture. And they who have this deep, heart-felt conviction, can no more be induced to deny the doctrine, than to deny any truth whatever which they know by their own consciousness.

But if I should deny the doctrine of innate depravity, and entertain those opinions of human nature which are set forth in the Letters to Trinitarians and Calvinists, my treatment of those who transgress the rules of morality would be materially different. I should indeed exhort them to repent and reform. But I should never occasion any uneasiness to their conscience, by directing their attention to the badness of the tree which bears bad fruit, or to the impurity of the fountain from which impure streams flow. Only let them be careful to guard against those particular sins to which they have been inclined, and maintain a regular, decent behavior; and I should bid them be quiet, and give no place to any gloomy apprehension respecting the necessity of an inward change. Thus the thing would pass off, without any great solicitude on my part or on theirs.

I mean to treat this subject exactly according to truth. If I exaggerate or discolor anything, and by such means do the least degree of injustice to those who differ from me, it is contrary to my intention; and the temper of mind which would lead to this, I heartily reprobate. But if I mistake not, the general conduct of those ministers who hold the opinions of the book to which I have undertaken a reply, corresponds substantially with the representa-

tion I have made. Such I am well persuaded would be my conduct, should I adopt those opinions. If sinners, deeply convinced of their depravity, and of the total inefficacy of any doings of theirs while their heart remains unrenewed — convinced too that they are enemies to God without excuse, and suffering the agony of soul which such conviction naturally produces; if sinners in this condition should come to me, and in the language of anxiety and distress should say, *what shall we do to be saved?* I should indeed pity fellow creatures in such distress, but at the same time should endeavor to satisfy them that their distress was without reason, and was occasioned by false views of religion, by some fright of imagination, or some derangement of the nervous system. I should labor to relieve their sense of guilt, their anxiety and fear, by inculcating more comforting views of the nature which God has given them, of the service he requires of them, and of the treatment they have a right to expect at his hand. In a word, I should look upon such persons to be in a state more deeply to be deplored, than if they were living in fashionable vice, regardless of God and eternity. If there are any ministers, who embrace the prevailing system of Unitarianism, but still do not feel and converse in the manner above described, I rejoice that they have something within them to counteract an influence, which I am persuaded would produce upon *me* the effect I have mentioned.

The denial of man's innate corruption must have a direct influence on our views of the nature and necessity of *the divine influence.* It may indeed seem desirable to Unitarians, that God should afford to men all the assistance they need in regulating their passions, and in pursuing a course of virtuous conduct. But their scheme implies that in reality but little divine aid is necessary. It ascribes to the Holy Spirit no such achievements as we ascribe to him, when the heart is renewed and the sinner converted. When those who have felt an entire hostility to the spiritual religion of the gospel, become penitent and humble, friends to God, and obedient to his law; the work performed by the Spirit of God has in our view, a greatness and glory, which

entitle it to the admiration of heaven and earth. But in what language do Unitarians speak of it?

In regard to the whole of religion, our belief of human depravity has an influence of the highest moment. It produces in Christians a strong conviction that, in respect to their good affections, their duties, and their enjoyments, they are in a state of total dependence on the Spirit of God. They apprehend their moral disease to be so deep-wrought in their nature, that it will yield to no power but that which is divine. If they have any degree of holiness, they ascribe it, not to any goodness of disposition naturally belonging to them, but to the grace of God. To God alone they give the honor of all their success in resisting temptation, in subduing the evils of their hearts, in cultivating pious affections and habits, and in doing good to their fellow creatures. They are fully convinced that, without his effectual operation, they can have nothing truly excellent in their character or life; nothing consoling in affliction, or in peaceful death. In the best moral state to which they ever attain on earth, they perceive so much want of conformity to God's perfect law, that the language of the Apostle becomes the sober expression of their feelings: "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Thus they are led, as Jeremy Taylor directs, "so to live as if they were always under a physician's hand." In short it is manifest, that those Christians, who admit with suitable impressions on their minds, the orthodox doctrine of depravity, must find in it a variety of motives, powerfully constraining them to constant and fervent prayer, to self-denial, to a godly jealousy over their own hearts, to a watchful avoidance of everything which can minister to their moral corruption, and to efforts of the greatest intensity to "put off the old man with his deeds, and to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

I must decline here, as I did in my Letters, any formal comparison betweeen the general character of the orthodox, and and of Unitarians. I am rather disposed to confess, that among those who profess to believe the common doctrine of depravity,

and even among those who preach it, instances of wickedness sometimes occur of the most hateful aspect, stamping the perpetrators with indelible infamy. These instances I regard as painful proofs of that deep, inveterate corruption of human nature, which has been under discussion. At the same time I contend, that the cordial belief of the doctrine tends to produce and actually has produced the most salutary influence, and that those views of the human character which my opponents attempt to vindicate, naturally lead to the consequences which I have described.

CHAPTER IX.

Mr. Channing and others have accused the orthodox generally of maintaining certain opinions on the subject of Election. We have repelled the accusation, by saying, that *we do not maintain those opinions.* Dr. Ware's apology for Mr. Channing is this: — if the orthodox "do not maintain the opinions against which the sermon of Mr. Channing is directed, there seems to have been no good reason why they should feel themselves at all concerned in the charge. Calvinists only who *do* maintain them, can fairly consider their opinions as attacked, and themselves called upon to defend them." This apology would have been satisfactory, if Mr. Channing had directed his sermon against *opinions* merely, and not against *men.* But as the charges contained in the sermon are made against *the orthodox*, we have this to do with them at least, that is, *to declare them untrue.* And as Mr. Channing has been distinctly informed that we disclaim the sentiments which he has charged upon us, it would be no unnatural expectation, that *he* would have something to do, besides continuing, without abatement or correction, to publish charges by which the great body of Christians in this country are as much injured, as he himself would be if the same charges were published against him.

It must not be forgotten that the doctrine of Election, which orthodox Christians believe, and orthodox ministers preach, is not the doctrine which our opposers ascribe to us. The picture which Unitarians and Arminians draw of the doctrine is, in its *essential features*, very unlike the doctrine which we maintain. John Wesley says, "The sum of all is this; one in twenty (suppose) of mankind, are elected; nineteen in twenty are reprobated. The elect shall be saved, *do what they will;* the reprobate shall be damned, *do what they can.*" Now the fact is, that human ingenuity could not make a representation of the doctrine, more uncandid, distorted, or false.

In my Letters, I represented the doctrine of Election, in a general view, as implying *the eternal purpose of God respecting his own acts in the work of redemption;* that is, the eternal purpose of God to do what he actually does in saving sinners. Dr. Ware thinks no Unitarian would dissent from this form of the doctrine. It would seem then from this concession of his, that the eternal purpose of God, as we understand it, is thought by Unitarians to differ, in some important respects, from *what really takes place*, and that it is on this account simply that they object to our doctrine. If this should prove to be the case, the limits of the controversy would be very much narrowed; as all the objections against the doctrine of an eternal purpose, from its alleged inconsistency with man's freedom and accountableness, with the invitations of the gospel, etc., would be superseded, and the simple inquiry would be, whether our doctrine gives a representation of the divine purpose, correspondent to the facts which occur in divine providence.

The *existence* of an *eternal purpose* in a mind possessed of *eternal intelligence*, is self-evident. And nothing is more certain from Scripture, than that God eternally entertained a design respecting human salvation. As to this there can be no dispute. And it is equally clear, that the purpose of God must correspond with what actually takes place; so that, by observing what comes to pass in divine providence, we learn not merely that there was a purpose in the divine mind, but what that purpose was. The

events which take place show us at once, what God actually does, and what were his purposes. This then I lay down and repeat, as a universal truth, and a truth of special importance in this controversy, that God's purposes respecting the salvation of men, and all other subjects, correspond perfectly with his administration, or rather, that *his administration corresponds with his purposes.* There can be no unforeseen occurrence, no event not predetermined. I would say then, to make the subject still more plain, that so far as the acts of the divine administration are right, the divine purposes are right. In the discussion of this subject therefore, I find it most convenient and satisfactory to fix my attention on *the divine administration*, which is a visible, definite thing, actually exhibited before me, and from that to regulate my opinions respecting the divine purposes. If I find what God does in the government of the world, for what ends he does it, and in what order, I learn what was the plan in the divine mind from eternity. If the acts of the divine administration are holy, just and good; equally holy, just and good is the divine purpose respecting those acts. So that whatever there may be in our doctrine which is exceptionable, it cannot be our believing that God has a purpose, or that his purpose is eternal and immutable. For if the thing purposed, that is, the divine administration, is wise and benevolent, the purpose also is wise and benevolent. And it is surely far enough from being a dishonor to God, that he should eternally and unchangeably entertain a wise and benevolent design. Nor can our doctrine be excepted to, because we maintain that the purpose of God relates to *all events* which take place. For if all events do in fact take place in such a manner as is consistent with the perfections of God, then clearly, his *purposing* that they should take place in just such a manner is equally consistent with his perfections. It is then altogether unreasonable to object to the declaration in the catechism, that God has "foreordained whatsoever comes to pass;" that is, that his purpose extends to all events in his administration. For if every part of his *administration* is right, his having *purposed* every part is right. There is then no danger of carrying the doctrine of the divine purposes,

properly understood, to too great an extent. For it is as proper for God to determine *all* his own acts, as to determine a part, if all are as wise and good as a part. I say then, that no man in his senses can think we carry the doctrine too far, when we assert that God predetermines everything which is comprised in his whole administration. There is indeed something faulty in our doctrine, if we say that God determines any particular thing, which in fact he never does determine, and which never takes place; or if we say he determines it in a different manner from that in which it actually takes place. For example; if we should maintain that God determined to save Judas, or to cast off Paul, we should be chargeable with an error, in maintaining that God determined what in fact he did not determine, and what never took place. Or if we should say, God determined to cast off and punish Judas for any reason but for his wickedness, we should be chargeable with misrepresenting the proximate reason of that purpose. And our mistake would be of the same nature, if we should maintain that God determined to bestow the rewards of heaven upon Paul, without any regard to his holy character and actions. And as to his character, we should mistake, if we should maintain that God determined it should be formed in any way except that in which it was really formed. My inquiry is, how was the character of Paul and of Judas actually formed? Under the influence of what causes, and in what circumstances? The actual formation of character in such circumstances, and under such an influence, exactly answers to the divine purpose; and the divine purpose, to be stated correctly, must be stated as agreeing, in all respects, with what thus actually occurs in the course of divine providence. By fixing our thoughts in this manner on the things which really come to pass, and on the *order* and *manner* in which they come to pass, we may arrive at a view of the divine purposes, which is liable to no uncertainty, and no difficulty.

These remarks are as applicable to the purpose of God which is called Election, as to any other. I have represented Election, in a general view, as *the purpose of God to do just what he actually does in saving sinners*, and to do it in the manner in which he

actually does it. To this Dr. Ware thinks there is no objection. He allows then, that there is an eternal, immutable purpose of God respecting human salvation, and that God eternally purposed *all* which he actually does in the work of salvation. We cannot make God's purpose either too extensive or too particular, if we make it agree entirely with his work. Now God does in fact save a certain number of human beings. At the judgment day, Christ will say to the multitude on his right hand, consisting of a *certain, definite number of individual believers*, "come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." God must have eternally designed to do just what he does in the present life, and what he will do at the judgment day; that is, he must have designed to save that same definite number of individuals. And if we thus represent the divine purpose as agreeing with the divine acts, no one can object to our doctrine. For is it not granted that God eternally purposed to do just what he actually does in time? Now God saves a definite number of *individuals*. He must then have determined to do it. If any man denies this, he must say, either that God does not in fact save a definite number of individuals, or that he does this without previously intending to do it.

By these remarks I wish to make it clear that there can properly be no dispute respecting the doctrine of the divine *purposes*, taken by itself. The controversy really respects the divine administration. The proper inquiry is, *what God actually does*. If we agree in this, we shall of course agree as to his purposes. By conducting the controversy in this way, we shall simplify our inquiry, and free it at once from more than half its perplexity.

My object in this chapter is not to attempt a particular discussion of the subject, but merely to exhibit, in its outlines, the manner in which the doctrine may be satisfactorily stated, and in which it may be effectually guarded against the difficulties which are supposed to attend it, and the misconstructions often put upon it. If we take care first to learn from Scripture and observation what God actually does, and in what manner he does it, we can have no difficulty in passing from this to a satisfactory view of his

purposes. In this way it is easy to correct various mistakes, which have been made in stating the doctrine. Do you ask whether the doctrine of Election implies, that *only a small part of mankind are chosen to salvation?* I answer, we must inquire whether there is anything in the word of God which shows this. And here we do indeed find passages, which declare the small number of good men who lived at particular times; but none which declare that there will be only a small number finally saved. We must inquire too, what our own observation and the history of past ages teach. Here the evidence is clear, that, through all generations past, a comparatively small part of the human species have been saved from sin. But there is abundant reason to believe that, in the ages to come, it will be exceedingly different from what it has been heretofore. Hence we conclude that the Scripture doctrine of Election does not imply, that only a small part of mankind are chosen to salvation. It is, therefore, a manifest error to state the doctrine thus. And any one who gets advantage against it in this way gets it unfairly.

Again. Does the Scripture doctrine of Election imply that the elect will be saved, let them do what they will — that is, whether they repent and obey the gospel, or not? Here, according to our general principle, we consult the Scriptures to learn what God actually does. First; making salvation mean the blessedness of heaven, we inquire whether God admits men to this, without any regard to their character and conduct. Everything in the Bible stands against such a notion. Heaven is granted only to the penitent, the obedient, the holy. Secondly; salvation may denote the *regeneration*, or *first conversion* of sinners, which is salvation begun. Agreeably to this view, the question stands thus; does God renew sinners, or begin the work of salvation in them, on account of their previous character or conduct? The Bible and observation both teach that he does not. Men possessing all the varieties of character which the world has exhibited, have been converted. If I should name Saul of Tarsus as an instance, my opponents would probably object and say it was a *miracle.* My reply would be, that God works no miracle which

violates the principles of a just administration, and that Paul makes no such distinction between himself and others, but expressly represents his case as a pattern to others, who should afterwards believe. 1 Tim. 1: 15, 16. So that his declaration is obviously just, in regard to *Christians generally*, that God first calls them and saves them from sin, "not according to their works, but according to his own purpose and grace." Whenever God first makes men holy, he must do it without regard to any goodness in them. He can look at no "works of righteousness which they have done," but must act from the impulse of his own infinite love. And we are to view the purpose of God in relation to this subject, as in all respects corresponding to the manner of his acting. It seems then perfectly clear, that God did not determine to regenerate men, or make them holy, from any foresight of repentance, faith, or good works, "as conditions or causes moving him thereunto." The *first* production of holiness cannot surely have respect to any *previous* holiness. But I could not say, in the same sense, that God determined to give men the blessedness of heaven, without any foresight of repentance or good works, as conditions; because the Bible represents repentance and good works, and perseverance in them, as necessary conditions of final happiness. And if God now in fact makes them conditions, he must have regarded them as such in his eternal purpose. That act of divine grace which is *wholly unconditional*, is, as I am led by the word of God to understand it, the first formation of a holy character, or the commencement of real goodness in the heart. Without enlarging here, I would just say, in accordance with the general principle more fully expressed in my Letters, that the divine purposes are just as conditional as the divine acts.

If then there is any objection against our doctrine of the divine purposes, the objection must in reality lie against what we assert to be matter of fact in the divine administration. The two things which seem to be regarded as particularly objectionable, are, 1, that the conversion and salvation of men is a matter of mere grace, all regard to personal merit being excluded; 2,

that the grace of God in the conversion of sinners is distinguishing — in other words, that it is so dispensed, that of those who are equally unworthy of favor and equally deserving of punishment, some are renewed and others not.

The proper way to dispose of the first of these particulars is, to place it by the side of those texts which describe the moral character and state of all men, as by nature entirely sinful, and those which represent the death of Christ as the grand procuring cause of all the good conferred on human beings, and those which declare that salvation is wholly of grace, to the exclusion of all works of righteousness. To these texts I might add others, which show the actual views of good men respecting themselves.

As to the second point, namely, the difference among men equally undeserving, — it is clear that we cannot properly decide against it; because, with our limited and obscure views, we cannot possibly determine that infinite wisdom may not see it to be necessary to make such a difference, in order to the highest interests of the universe. To say that, because *we* can see no reasons for it, therefore there are none, would ill become creatures like us. It is easy to show from Scripture, that such a difference has been made, and from common observation, that it is now made. That divine grace actually makes a difference among those who are equally sinful, renewing some and not others, is a plain, historic fact, just as well attested as that God makes a difference with respect to longevity, among men who live in the same climate, and possess equal vigor of natural constitution.

I am aware of the common objection, that making such a difference is *unjust*. My first remark in relation to this objection is, that if it is in fact *unjust* to make the difference, it is certain that God would never do it in a single instance. For God will no more do injustice in a single instance, than in ten thousand instances. But it is generally admitted, that a difference like what I have asserted has been made in some extraordinary instances, as that of Paul and Mary Magdalene. But no one can mean to admit that God does, in any instance, commit an act of injustice.

But *to whom is it unjust* for God to make such a difference? To those who are saved? Our opponents will not say this. The injustice which they allege must relate to those who perish. But how is the bestowment of gratuitious blessings *on others* any injustice to *them?* I might rather say, how can it be unjust to inflict on them an evil which they deserve, or to withhold a favor which they do not deserve?

Dr. Ware endeavors to show, that the method of designating the heirs of salvation, which the doctrine of Election implies, can neither be reconciled with our natural notions of the moral government of God, nor with what he has made known to us of his character, purposes and government in the Christian revelation.

His first objection is from our natural conceptions and feelings. "Following," he says, "the light of our reason and the natural impulse of our feelings, we find it impossible to imagine that the Author of our being can regard and treat his offspring in the manner which the doctrine in question attributes to him."

This argument can have no weight, if it is found that our natural conceptions and feelings are so disordered, as not to be a safe guide. Human reason, freed from wrong bias and properly instructed, and the feelings of the heart when sanctified by the divine Spirit, do, in my apprehension, perfectly approve of everything contained in the doctrine of Election. That reason, disordered as it is by sin, should mistake on this subject, is no more strange, than that it should mistake on a thousand other subjects. That the feelings of a world which lieth in wickedness, should rise up against the purpose of God in respect to salvation, is no more strange, than that they should rise up, as they do, against various dispensations of providence. "The foolishness of man perverteth his way; and his heart fretteth against the Lord." I allow, indeed, that the doctrine of Election, *as set forth by Dr. Ware*, admits of no defence. He represents it as implying, that without any foreseen difference of character and desert in men, God regarded some with complacency and love, and others with disapprobation and hatred and wrath;" that is, that God re-

garded *with complacency* that same character in the elect, which, in the non-elect, he regarded with *disapprobation* and *hatred.* This representation has no resemblance to our doctrine. Any man will be convinced of this, who examines what Dr. Ware quotes from my Letters, or from the Westminster Divines. Our doctrine is, that God regards those sinners who are to be saved, not with *approbation* or *complacency*, but with that *benevolence* or *compassion* which is consistent with the highest *disapprobation;* that he chooses them to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit; that he determines to renew them, and so to *make* them objects of his complacency, — they being naturally objects of his entire disapprobation. We maintain that God regards things just as they are.

I must make similar remarks on another clause, in which we are represented as holding that, "without any reference to the future use or abuse of their nature, God appoints some to everlasting happiness, and the rest to everlasting misery; and that this appointment, entirely arbitrary, is the cause, not the consequence of holiness in the one, and of the defect of holiness in the other." Our doctrine does not imply that God appoints some to happiness and others to misery, without any reference to their future conduct. We maintain that God does, indeed, give the blessedness of heaven to his people, as an *unmerited gift*, — that is, without seeing anything in them which renders them *deserving* of such a gift; but not without a regard to that *holiness* in them, which is a necessary *qualification* for heaven. He does not admit them to heaven as *impenitent*, *unholy*. He first makes them holy, and then receives them to heaven; and he determines things in the same order.

As to the non-elect, God will doom them to punishment, not without reference to their character and conduct, but *because they have been workers of iniquity*. He will do it for this reason, and for this only. And, for this same reason, he predetermines to do it. So the Westminster Divines. "The rest of mankind God was pleased to ordain to dishonor and wrath *for their sin*." If it is proper for God to *inflict* such an evil upon men for their sin,

it is proper that he should previously determine to do it. No man can deny this. Yet we, who assert this, are charged with making God a monster of malevolence and caprice.

It excites no small surprise that Dr. Ware should assert what follows, as though it were something different from the belief of the orthodox, and incompatible with the doctrine of Election. He says, "The final distinctions that are to be made between men, we are again and again told, are to be wholly according to the difference of moral character. It is that these are righteous, and those wicked; these have done well, and those have done ill." This is a view of the subject upon which I have insisted a thousand times. I consider this to be one of those plain truths of revelation, which ought to limit and regulate our conceptions of other subjects, and I admit no views of the doctrine of Election, or of salvation by grace, or of any other doctrine, inconsistent with this.

The difficulty at which Dr. Ware and others stumble, seems to arise from their not taking the whole subject into view. The Westminster Divines, and the orthodox generally, say, that God not only appointed the elect to glory, but appointed *all the means thereunto*. This is the same as saying, that those whom he purposed to save, he purposed first to sanctify; or, in the language of Scripture, that he chose them to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit. How, and in what order, does God actually proceed in saving sinners? First, he provides for them a Redeemer and invites them to accept him. Secondly, he calls them with a holy calling, leads them to repentance, pardons their sins, and by an effectual discipline prepares them for heaven; and then he shows his approbation of them, and graciously rewards them. Their holiness is a condition, and on their part the only condition, of their title to heaven. Such is the order of God's acts in the salvation of sinners. Exactly answerable to this is his purpose. It is the exact counterpart of his administration. And as, in his administration, the propriety of one event depends upon its connection with another, so it does in his purpose. It is unjust to represent that God predetermines *any event whatever*, without

regard to its connection with other events. It is neglecting that order and connection of things, on which the character of the divine administration depends. But it is from overlooking this order and connection, that the opposers of our doctrine get all their advantage against it. We cordially subscribe to the following declaration of Dr. Ware, though he seems to think our belief different. "So far are the reasons of the final distinction to be made between those who are saved and those who perish, from being concealed in the divine mind, that nothing is more distinctly made known. The New Testament is full of it." I will add, that it is, in my apprehension, revealed with equal clearness, that God makes a difference among men in respect of character, *without making known the reasons of what he does.*

Dr. Ware says, that "in the appointment of men to privileges and means, God has indeed given no account of his motives, nor assigned his reasons for the infinite variety that appears. He has exercised an absolute sovereignty, of which no account is given, and the reasons of which we are not competent to understand." And he expresses his approbation of "a free and unconditional appointment to the participation of privileges." Now if Dr. Ware will look through this statement, he may possibly discover as formidable difficulties in it, as those which attend our doctrine. For what is the *tendency* and *use* of means and privileges? Does not their whole value consist in their influence upon the character? The word of God, which is the best of our privileges, and which makes the principal difference between Christians and heathens, is the means of turning men from sin, and bringing them to love and obey God. "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." When God, in the exercise of that absolute sovereignty which Dr. Ware ascribes to him, appoints one part of the human race to the enjoyment of the Scriptures and other religious means, he doubtless does it to promote virtue and piety, or to render men holy. And the actual consequence of these privileges is, that many become penitent and holy. Now does Dr. Ware see no difficulty in asserting that God, by an act of "absolute sovereignty," grants to some, in distinction from others, privi-

leges which are designed to produce, and to a great extent do produce, a sanctifying effect upon their character? — privileges without which, according to the Apostle, Rom. x, men cannot believe? As to the difficulty, where is the difference between Dr. Ware's doctrine and ours? We say, God determines to bring some men to repentance, and make them holy, and therefore gives them those means which, by his blessing, will produce the effect. Dr. Ware says, that God, in the exercise of his *absolute sovereignty*, appoints some men, in distinction from others, to the participation of those means, by which they are, to some extent, formed to holiness. And he would doubtless allow, that God gives them these means, knowing infallibly what will be the consequence, and intending that just such a desirable consequence shall take place. Now is not this *in effect* making a difference among men with respect to *character*, as well as to *means* and *privileges?* If means and privileges do not tend to make a difference in character, of what value are they? Why are they bestowed? Dr. Ware would doubtless go as far as we, in extolling the happy consequences of the Christian revelation upon those communities which enjoy it. But those consequences respect moral and religious character. To give that revelation, is to contribute directly, and in many cases effectually, to the formation of a holy character. And a previous determination to give that revelation is *in effect* a determination to make men holy. On the other hand, to withhold the Sacred Oracles and the other means of religion, is to leave men without any reasonable prospect of being brought to repentance. The truths and precepts and promises of Scripture are the only means of curing the moral diseases of men. To withhold the Scriptures is to leave them to the fatal influence of those evils. Had the inhabitants of Tyre and Sodom enjoyed the same means with those, who were favored with the Scriptures and the personal ministry of Christ; "they would have repented." The means would have been, to a greater or less degree, effectual. If those means had been afforded to the inhabitants of one of those places, and not the other; a difference between the inhabitants of those two places in point of

moral character would unquestionably have been the consequence. In Great Britain and America there is a large number of enlightened and sincere worshippers of God, while among other equal portions of the human race in Asia and Africa, none can be found. How can this be accounted for? According to Dr. Ware, it must be ascribed to difference of circumstances. And difference of circumstances is traced by him to "the absolute sovereignty of God." Thus then his scheme stands. In "the exercise of absolute sovereignty," God has given some men and not others, the Scriptures and other means. These means are given for the very purpose of producing an effect on the character, and to a great extent they actually accomplish this purpose. The character, thus formed, determines the condition of men in the future world. In all the instances, in which men are thus turned from sin and fitted for the kingdom of heaven, these things make a connected series; — means of moral culture, — formation of character, — condition in the future world. Condition in the future world depends on character; character, on the enjoyment of means; and the enjoyment of means, according to Dr. Ware, on "the absolute sovereignty of God." Now so far as these things are connected, if God appoints one, he does in effect appoint the other; especially as the connection itself depends on his will. And yet Dr. Ware objects strongly to considering God's appointment as relating either to men's character, or to their future condition. But why? What difficulty can there be in admitting that the appointment of God relates to all these, and relates to them just in the order and manner in which they take place? My position is, that *the purpose of God exactly agrees with the acts of his administration.* This is the faith of the orthodox, though expressed in different ways. Some choose to say that God, by a sovereign act, first appointed the eternal condition of the elect, and then "appointed all the means thereunto;" that is, purposed to give them his word, and by means of that word to make them holy, and thus prepare them for heaven. Others prefer a different order, and say, that God first determined to give men his word and make them holy, and then to

bestow the rewards of holiness. Both come to the same thing. According to the first, the design of God to receive men to heaven is connected with a design to make them holy, and that is connected with a design to give them the means of holiness. According to the other, his design to give them the means of holiness is connected with the design to produce, by those means, a proper effect upon their character; that is, to make them holy; and his design to make them holy is connected with his design to make them happy in his kingdom. Thus things are connected in fact; and thus, according to both statements, they were regarded in the divine purpose.

If with Dr. Ware and others, we should assert a *conditional* purpose of God in regard to men's character; how should we be less encumbered with difficulty? God determined to make men holy, on condition of their faithfully using the means he should afford them. But in respect to those who will actually be saved, he knew that the condition would be performed. And he knew it would be performed, not as a matter of chance, but under the influence of proper causes, — causes under his control, and deriving their efficacy from him. He determined to put them in such circumstances, to hold up such motives, and to exert such an influence, as he knew would persuade them to use their privileges aright, and to obey the gospel. Now this is substantially, though not in form, the same with the doctrine of the orthodox. They maintain, that God purposed to admit to heaven a certain number of our race. But how? As unsanctified sinners? No; but in consequence of their previous deliverance from sin, and their preparation for heaven. Their possessing real holiness is an essential prerequisite to their being admitted into heaven; and so must be regarded as a condition of their final happiness. We maintain too, that God determined to make his people holy. But how? By a physical influence operating upon them as machines? No; but by an influence suited to their moral nature. He determined to sanctify them *through the truth.* Now this statement of the subject is as honorable to God, as conformable to reason, Scripture, and fact, and as free from difficulty, as the other.

The doctrine of Election is represented by my opponent as not reconcilable with the notions of the divine character, "which we derive from our observation of his conduct in the government of the world;" that is, it is not reconcilable with what we learn from facts. But my apprehension is, that facts prove the doctrine. For what are the facts? A difference really exists among men as to character. How is this difference to be accounted for? If it is *original*, it must be traced to the purpose and agency of our Creator. This Dr. Ware would by no means allow; and of course must say that the good and the bad are originally of the same character. I ask then for the cause of the present difference. Is it owing, as Dr. Ware in another place suggests, to education, example, and other outward circumstances? All these are appointed by divine providence. In the appointment of men to these, Dr. Ware asserts, that God "exercises an absolute sovereignty." And if it is more or less owing to means, privileges, and outward circumstances, that some are holy, while others are not, the difference is in the same degree to be traced to what Dr. Ware calls the "absolute sovereignty of God." But the characters of men, who have the *same* privileges, differ; and it will be said by Dr. Ware, that this difference depends on the manner in which they use the means afforded them. Some men voluntarily use their faculties and privileges aright, and so acquire the habits of real goodness; while others abuse their faculties and privileges, and exhibit the marks of obstinate wickedness. Suppose now this voluntary conduct to be the proximate cause of the difference existing among men in regard to character, and that a part of the human race become holy, because they rightly use their privileges. This right use of their privileges is, then, a *fact*, — and a fact on which their everlasting interest depends. How is this fact to be accounted for? Is it owing to the influence of any causes, either physical or moral? Does it result from men's disposition or choice? How then is this disposition or choice to be accounted for? The Scripture accounts for it by the divine influence. It represents God as forming men to holiness. If Dr. Ware is satisfied with this mode of accounting for the fact, the controversy is ended.

But if he should say that the gracious influence of God is always granted on the condition of men's having previously some right desire or choice, I would ask again how we are to account for that desire or choice, which is not produced by the Spirit of God? Where shall we look for the cause? Is the right desire or choice owing to the influence of motives? And is it not God who has given men a mind suited to be influenced by motives? And does he not so order things in his providence, that those motives shall be presented before them, which will effectually excite such a choice or desire?

Thus common observation leads us to notice what exists in fact, what God does in his providence with respect to the characters, and consequently with respect to the future condition of men; and from this we infer what his design was.

Dr. Ware says, that according to our doctrine, what men are to be and how they are to act, is determined beforehand, without any reference to their exertions. A strange notion truly, since it is impossible that men should *be anything*, or *act in any way whatever*, without involving their *exertions*.

Dr. Ware thinks that God's sovereign appointment of the everlasting condition of men is "inconsistent with all that implies the influence of motives." But he could not have thought so, if he had only considered the divine purpose as agreeing exactly with fact; and, finding it a fact that moral agents are and must be influenced by motives, had concluded, that God's appointment was, that they *should be influenced* by motives just as they are. The position of our opponents if well examined, will evidently amount to this, — that *God's determining* that men shall act from motives *hinders* them from acting in this manner; that his determining that they shall be moral agents, makes it impossible they should be so. Whereas we have been very much inclined to think, that God's determination, if it has any influence, must tend to *accomplish* the thing determined, not to *prevent* it.

This subject is placed in a very clear light by those texts which show, that men have acted with perfect freedom and voluntariness, while fulfilling the divine purpose. The apostles declare, Acts 4:

26 — 28, that the murderers of Christ did what *the hand and counsel of God determined before to be done.* But did they act without motives? Here is a plain case. In those very actions which were predetermined, they were influenced by motives, and were in all respects, moral, accountable agents. Nor is this a singular case. So far as our subject is concerned, it is on a level with all the instances of wickedness which have ever occurred. From the single case of Pharaoh, the Apostle draws arguments to establish a general principle. So I reason here. If God predetermined the actions of those who crucified the Saviour, he must have predetermined the actions of other sinners. This none can reasonably deny, unless they can offer some satisfactory reason why God should determine the actions of Christ's enemies, but not of other sinners. And if the enemies of Christ, whose actions were predetermined, were still influenced by motives, and were moral agents, so may *others* be, whose actions are predetermined.

In some respects, Dr. Ware well illustrates the general principle for which I contend, in a passage of his Fourth Letter. Speaking of the design of God in raising up Pharaoh, he says: "How did God actually show his power in him, and make him the instrument of his glory? It was by giving him the opportunity to act out his character; by allowing him full scope for displaying the incorrigible obstinacy of his disposition, and then by inflicting upon him exemplary punishment for the instruction and warning of mankind; thus making him the instrument of promoting some of the best purposes of heaven, in the free and voluntary exercise of his power." Here the perfect consistency of free and voluntary action with the accomplishment of God's purpose is fully and very justly asserted.

It will be seen then how little reason Dr. Ware has for what he has written, p. 61, 62, in which he represents the orthodox doctrine as inconsistent "with all that implies the influence of motives" — "with all that implies guilt, ill-desert, blame-worthiness in the disobedient" — "and with all those promises, threatenings, warnings, etc., which imply in those to whom they are addressed,

a power of being influenced." If the divine purpose leaves men, I should rather say *makes* them *free*, *moral agents*, as we see is implied in the case of Pharaoh and the murderers of Christ, they are certainly capable of being influenced by *motives*, so that promises, threats and warnings are evidently proper; and if guilt can exist in any case, it may here.

Dr. Ware says, p. 62, that this doctrine "represents God as unjust, — exacting endless punishment for sins committed in following the nature which he had given us, and acting in pursuance of his decree." I reply. If sin exists, it must be committed in following our dispositions, or the propensities of our nature. And I have before shown, that the circumstance of our dispositions or propensities being natural or original, cannot render them, or the actions resulting from them, less criminal. As to the other part; can Dr. Ware, after giving the explanation above quoted, of the divine conduct respecting Pharaoh, think it unjust for God to punish men for sins they commit, while acting in pursuance of his purpose? Did not Joseph's brethren, though their hearts meant not so, act in pursuance of God's purpose? Did not those who carried the Israelites into captivity, and those who murdered the Prince of life, act according to God's purpose? And was God unjust and cruel in punishing them?

I regret that Dr. Ware has made use of expressions and arguments like those above recited. They are such as men of liberal minds, who examine subjects profoundly and judge without prejudice, ought never to employ. It would be easy, by means equally plausible, to oppose those doctrines of Scripture which Dr. Ware believes, and to discredit the Scripture itself.

Our opposers are much inclined to look at the difficulties and objections, which attend our doctrine of the divine purpose. Why will they not pay equal attention to the difficulties which attend the *denial* of this doctrine? If they deny that the characters of men exist in accordance with the eternal purpose of God; they must maintain either that God had no design at all in regard to their characters, or else that he designed they should be different from what they really are. Will they say, God had no determi-

nation respecting the moral characters of men? Then he could have had no determination respecting any of those causes which contribute to form their character. And if so, then he could have had no determination respecting "the privileges, means, and external condition" of men, to which it is obvious their characters are very much owing. But Dr. Ware asserts that God has appointed men's privileges, means and external condition, *with absolute sovereignty*. So it comes to this; he has appointed everything, which can operate as a cause or means of moral character but has carefully abstained from determining what the *character* shall be. And why? Because his determining what it shall be would be inconsistent with its being what he determined.

But if you say, God *had* a determination respecting the characters of men, but that his determination was that they should be different from what they are; then God is disappointed. But every disappointment must be owing to some defect of wisdom or power, and of course must belong to an imperfect being.

I now proceed to notice the manner in which Dr. Ware attempts to invalidate my arguments from Scripture.

My first argument was founded on those passages, in which Christ speaks of a part of mankind, as given him of the Father. As an example I quoted John 17: 2. "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." The sense which I gave to the text was this; that the Father has given to Christ a part of the human race, and that those who are thus given to Christ, are the persons who shall have eternal life.

Dr. Ware thinks our Saviour could not have meant to assert the common doctrine of Election in this text, because in Chapter xv, "he addresses the same persons of whom he here speaks as given him of the Father, in language implying that they might abide in him and bring forth fruit, or failing to abide in him, might be taken away," etc. "But," he says, "according to the doctrine in question, there could be no such contingency in the case." The reasoning is this. If God had a real design to save those particular persons, whom he finally does save, Christ could not

have exhorted his disciples as he did, to abide in him, and enforced his exhortation by telling them the plain truth as to the consequences of their faithful adherence to him, and the consequences of their forsaking him. Which is the same as saying, if God does certainly determine to save a particular number of human beings, he cannot speak to them in the language of direction, exhortation, and warning, — cannot address them with motives,— cannot do anything to excite their hopes or fears, or persuade them to obedience. And all this is really the same as saying, — if God determines to train up a certain number of men for eternal life, he cannot use the proper means to carry his determination into effect. I think the opposite is true. If God really determines to guide a certain number of men in the way to heaven, it is reasonable to expect, that he will use the means best suited to accomplish his determination. And admitting those who are to be saved to be moral agents, I should think that God would of course make use of those precepts, warnings, promises and threats, by which moral agents are most effectually influenced. What would Dr. Ware say, if we should apply the reasoning he relies upon in this case, to events in the natural world, — thus.— If God certainly determines to give us an abundant harvest, it will be altogether inconsistent for him to cause the sun to shine or rain to descend, or to use any other means to secure that harvest which he has determined to give.— It is equally absurd to reason thus in regard to the moral world. If God determines to accomplish an event of a moral nature, is it consistent that he should use any means whatever? and if any, is it consistent for him to use those which are suited to moral agents? The remaining question would be, are warnings, exhortations, promises, and threats, suited to influence moral agents? It is obvious that they can be influenced in no other way; and that if God determines to bring a larger or smaller number of men to serve him faithfully, and so to prepare them for future happiness, he must influence them to do it by such means as those above mentioned, or not at all; — unless men cease to be moral agents, and become capable of being moved like senseless machines. We see then, that the very thing which Dr.

Ware thinks conclusive against the doctrine of Election, naturally and necessarily results from it, supposing it to be true. We see also, that all the contingency which is implied in the use of exhortations, conditional promises and threats, is perfectly consistent with the doctrine of Election.

If it were necessary still further to defend the position I have taken in regard to the use of means, I could easily adduce particular instances in which it appears, that God has actually determined the characters and actions of men, and yet in those very instances has made use of all the means suited to moral agents, and has thus carried his determination into effect.

Those who urge the above-named objection against our doctrine, do not consider that the divine purposes, like all parts of the divine administration, respect men, *as moral agents*, and are accomplished by a system of means, exactly suited to operate upon such agents. Did they not lose sight of this principle, they could not help seeing, that it is just as consistent with our doctrine for God to use warnings, exhortations, promises and threats to influence his people, as to give them *commands*, or to use proper means to accomplish any of his designs.

Another argument which Dr. Ware urges against my reasoning from the passage in John xvii, is, that in a previous chapter, we meet with the following sentence: "For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me." "Here," Dr. Ware says, "the love of God is represented, not as the cause, but as the consequence of the faith and love of the disciples." But if we would understand the subject fully, we must compare this text with others, particularly with two passages from the same writer; 1 John 4: 10, 19. "Not that we loved God, but that he loved us." "We love him because *he first loved us*." Dr. Ware thinks if our doctrine of Election is true, "it is impossible to see with what propriety it could be said of the elect, that God loved them because of their love to Christ; for his distinguishing love was, by that supposition, the *cause* of their love." I contend that in the most important sense, it *was* the cause; and that in the two texts last quoted it is clearly represented in this light; though in anoth-

er sense, it is as represented in the passage cited by Dr. Ware. Now to avoid a contradiction between the different passages above cited, we must refer to a very obvious distinction between the different significations of the word *love*, as used in these passages. When we speak of the love of God in the sense in which it is used in the texts quoted from the Epistle, and elsewhere, that is, *as benevolence towards sinners, operating effectually for their salvation*, we must consider it as the cause of their love to him, yea, the cause of whatever is excellent in their character or happy in their condition. And is it not common for devout Christians of all denominations, to attribute all good in creatures to the goodness of God? The love of God in this sense is good-will, kindness, compassion, and is exercised towards men, considered as sinners. Of course, it implies no *approbation* or *complacency*. But the word, as used John 16: 27, evidently denotes *approbation, and actions expressive of it*, and so necessarily presupposes *moral good* in those who are its objects. They enjoy the divine *approbation*, because they love Christ. The love of God, thus understood, is the reward of our faith and piety; but it has no respect to the doctrine of Election; and the passage quoted can no more disprove the doctrine, than any other passage in the Bible. Thus the error in Dr. Ware's reasoning becomes obvious. He says; "If by those who are given to Christ we are to understand all to whom Christ will actually give eternal life, and this appointment to Christian faith and eternal life is wholly independent of anything in them as the ground of this distinction from the rest of the world; it is impossible to see with what propriety it could be said that God loved them, because of their love to Christ." But how impossible? God's love, here spoken of, evidently does not signify his original act in choosing men to salvation, but his *approbation* of them and his peculiar favor towards them, in consequence of their attachment to Christ. But how did he regard them *before* they had any love to Christ, and when they were *enemies?* Did he not look upon them with *benevolence* and *compassion*, and send his Son to die for them, and his Spirit to renew them? It is impossible for any one to show the least incompatibility between

God's originally exercising infinite *benevolence* towards a part of mankind, and choosing them to holiness and salvation, independently of anything in them as the ground of this distinction, and his regarding them *afterwards* with *complacency*, and manifesting himself to them as their friend, on account of their love and obedience to Christ.

Dr. Ware has another passage which we must not pass without notice. He represents "coming to Christ, believing on him, etc., as events not flowing from a sovereign appointment of God, but the result of the faithful use of means, in the exercise of a right disposition, and that the difference of character thus appearing between Christians and others, is the ground, not the consequence of their being given to Christ." Now I ask whether it is not a doctrine clearly taught in many parts of the Bible, that believing in Christ, and the possession of a right disposition and character, are fairly to be ascribed to the divine influence as the cause? And if so, whether the effectual operation of that cause, being a divine act, must not have been before settled in the divine mind? Nothing can be more evident, than that the text, John 6: 37, represents coming to Christ as the consequence of being given to Christ. "All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me." Their *coming* follows as the consequence of their being *given*. In the same verse it is said; "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." His not being cast out, i. e., his being accepted, is the consequence of his coming to Christ. It is equally evident, that men's coming to Christ is the consequence of their being given to Christ. The mode of expression here used, denotes, that the second thing mentioned is the consequence of the first. Thus we say, those who repent shall be forgiven. All who are pure in heart, shall see God. Whosoever believeth, shall have life. In all such cases, the meaning is obvious. And so I think Dr. Ware would understand the phrase in John 6: 37, if instead of being turned aside by a preconceived opinion, he would attend to the established principles of interpretation. Suppose we find in a book written by one of our Puritan fathers, the following declaration; namely, *all who are born of believing parents are baptized.*

Could we doubt that the writer meant to assert that the latter followed as the consequence of the former, and that the former was the ground of the latter. But Dr. Ware inverts the two parts of a sentence just like this, and makes that which is set forth as the consequence, to be the antecedent and cause of the other. "All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me." Dr. Ware's sense of it is; *all who come to me, the Father shall give me.* He says, "those only are given him of the Father, who come to him."

The next passage I cited to prove the doctrine of Election, was Eph. 1: 3—11. On supposition that the Apostle actually believed the doctrine as we do, it is inconceivable that he could have asserted it more plainly and emphatically, than he does in this passage. He teaches us that God had a purpose respecting those who are saved; and he teaches us what the purpose or choice was. "He hath blessed us, etc.,—*according as he hath chosen us in him, that we should be holy—having predestinated us to the adoption of children, etc.*" Here also we learn the date of the divine purpose; "before the foundation of the world." See also 2 Tim. 1: 9, "Who hath saved us and called us, not according to our works, but *according to his own purpose and grace.*"

As the principle concerned in the interpretation of these passages is of great consequence, and must determine the sense of other passages in relation to the same subject; I ask the attention of the reader to a careful investigation.

Dr. Ware undertakes to prove that the passage in Ephesians has no relation to the doctrine of Election. And one argument which he adduces to prove this, is, that the passage *refers not to individuals as such, but to the Christian community.*

For the present I admit what Dr. Ware supposes, namely, that the passage relates to the Christian community, or to Christians taken collectively. Now does this supposition remove any difficulty? If it is inconsistent for God to choose *individuals* to holiness and salvation; it is surely not less inconsistent for him to choose to the same blessings a large society of men. If any purpose or conduct relative to individuals is improper, certainly it

cannot be less improper, because it relates to a community, comprising a large number of individuals. So that whatever may be the purpose or conduct which Dr. Ware supposes to be ascribed to God in this passage; that same purpose or conduct must be as just and proper in regard to individuals, as in regard to a community. On this account it has appeared to me utterly irrelevant, for the opposers of our doctrine to introduce this distinction between the choice of individuals, and the choice of a community. If in any respect a divine purpose in relation to individuals is improper, that divine purpose is equally improper in relation to a community. There is no principle in ethics or theology, according to which an act of injustice or partiality towards individuals, changes its character when directed towards a community.

It is indeed an affair of great magnitude for particular persons to be chosen to enjoy important blessings, while others are passed by, and left without those blessings. But certainly it is an affair of no less magnitude, for a community or large society of men to be chosen to enjoy those blessings, while other communities are left without them. Whether the blessings intended are temporal or spiritual, the distinction which the divine purpose makes must occasion as much difficulty when it relates to communities, as when it relates to individuals; — as much surely, when it relates to the larger object, as when it relates to the less. I should think that any one would sooner object to the purpose of God, or any distinction he makes in his providence, respecting large bodies of men, than respecting individuals. I say then that whatever may be the nature of that eternal purpose of God which is spoken of in the text, and whatever blessings it secures to some in distinction from others; it is wholly without use for Dr. Ware to say, that purpose relates to communities, not to individuals; since, upon any supposition, the same divine purpose or conduct cannot be less objectionable when it relates to communities or nations, than when it relates to individuals. It is the opinion of Dr. Ware, that the divine purpose or choice spoken of, refers to temporal blessings, or to religious privileges, means and opportunities. Be it so. I ask

why he represents it as relating to *communities*, and not to *individuals;* since he must be as well satisfied as I am, that *such* a divine purpose may properly relate to individuals. On the other hand, if the divine purpose spoken of by the Apostle is to be understood as securing spiritual blessings, that is, sanctification, pardon, and eternal life, to those who are its objects; then surely Dr. Ware must find as many difficulties in supposing, that *such* a purpose relates to a community, as to individuals. What end, then, is answered by this distinction? And why is it so much relied upon by Dr. Ware and others, in their reasoning against the doctrine of Election? If the divine purpose should be understood to refer not to individuals, but to the Christian community; it would be of no use to the argument of Unitarians. But I have serious reasons to question the correctness of this opinion.

First. A community is a collection of *individuals*, who retain their individual existence, properties and relations. Now is it possible that any purpose or conduct of God should refer to a *society* of *men*, without referring to the *individuals* of whom that society is composed? Is it possible, for example, that a *community* should be visited with sickness or famine, and yet the *individuals* who compose that community escape? Is it possible that a community should receive any *blessing*, and yet the individual members continue destitute of it? Is it possible that any *law* should be *obligatory* upon a public body of men, which yet is not obligatory upon the individuals composing that body? Is it possible that we should promote the welfare of a society, without promoting the welfare of its members? How then could Dr. Ware assert, that the purpose of God mentioned in the passage under consideration, relates *not to individuals*, but to the Christian community?

Nor can it be of any use to Dr. Ware's argument for him to say, that this divine purpose does not relate "to individuals as such;" that is, to individuals, *as* individuals, or in their individual capacity. Suppose we admit this, and show that the divine purpose does not refer to them in their *individual capacity;* still

it must refer to them *as members of the body*, or in their *collective* capacity. Now do men cease to be *men*, by being collected together in society? Do they lose any of their intellectual or moral powers? Does their existence or their happiness become less important? Do they not stand in the same relation to God? Have they not as good reason to expect a just and proper treatment from God in their *collective* as in their *individual* capacity? If any purpose or act of God which relates to men as individuals, is liable to a charge of injustice or partiality; certainly it is not less liable, if it relates to them as collected together in society; since after being thus collected, they retain all their relations to God, and have an undiminished right to expect from him all that is just and equal.

That the purpose of God referred to, could not affect men as members of a community without affecting them as individuals, will appear evident, if we consider the *nature* of that divine purpose, and to *what kind of blessings* it related. The Apostle here speaks of Christians being chosen in Christ, *that they should be holy*, — predestinated *to the adoption of children*, — having *redemption through Christ's blood, the forgiveness of sins*, — and having *obtained an inheritance*. These are the blessings to which the divine purpose related. Now of which of these blessings can it be said, that it respects Christians not as *individuals*, but as *a community?* Is not a man *holy* in his individual capacity? Is he not adopted to be a *child of God*, as an individual? Do not a man's *sins* belong to him as an individual; and must not *forgiveness* respect him as an individual? And is it not as an individual that a man is *redeemed*, and made *an heir of heaven?* There is no blessing here spoken of, which is of such a nature that it can relate to men in any other capacity, than as *individual moral agents*.

But Dr. Ware says, the passage now before us, refers "not to final salvation, but to Christian privileges." It is indeed true that being made "holy," "forgiveness," and "redemption through the blood of Christ," are Christian *privileges*. But they are privileges connected with "final salvation," and evidently

involving it. And in the Epistle to the Thessalonians, the Apostle expressly mentions salvation, as the blessing secured by the divine purpose, — a salvation attained through sanctification of the Spirit. "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." Does not this refer to final salvation? And does not the predestination spoken of, Rom. 8: 29, 30, refer to final salvation? Let the reader judge.

But what are *the arguments* by which Dr. Ware proves, that the passage under consideration refers not to final salvation, but to Christian privileges? His first argument is, "that the Epistle is addressed to the whole Christian community at Ephesus, without any intimation that any expressions in it are applicable to some, and not to others." And where would have been the propriety of intimating that any of the expressions were applicable to some and not to others, when the whole community was made up of those who had openly renounced their sins, and in the face of persecution and death boldly professed their faith in Christ? A Christian community *then* was not what we generally call so *now*. The population of Ephesus, before the introduction of Christianity, were "without God in the world," — *atheists*. It was among such a people, that Paul gathered a Church, that is, a society of those whom God had "quickened," and "made nigh by the blood of Christ," and "sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." The rest of the Ephesians remained as they were, "enemies to God by wicked works." Accordingly, the Christian community among the Ephesians comprised those who were in the judgment of charity quickened, saved by grace, holy. But what is called a Christian community among us, comprises all who live together in any place or country where the Christian religion has been established. If any man should proceed in his reasoning on the supposition, that a church or Christian community among the Ephesians was the same, as what we call a Christian community here; he would betray great want of attention to facts, and would disregard one of the most important helps to a right understanding of the Scriptures, namely, that we should carefully con-

sider the circumstances of those who wrote them, and of those to whom they were written.

But Dr. Ware proceeds in his argument: "That this choice or predestination was not that of individuals to eternal life, but of all who received the Christian faith to the profession and privileges of the gospel, — appears still further from other expressions addressed in the same manner. It is for these same persons, saints, chosen, etc., that the Apostle thought it needful very earnestly to pray to God, 'that they might be strengthened with might by his Spirit, — that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith, — that they might be rooted and grounded in love;' very suitable to be addressed to professed believers as a promiscuous body; but such as we should hardly expect, if the persons designated were, by the very designation, understood to be those only who were certainly chosen to eternal life and were already grounded in love, etc."

Nothing can be plainer than that this reasoning of Dr. Ware does not answer his purpose. For every Christian on earth, however advanced he may be in holiness, and however strong his hope of heaven, does offer up just such prayer as that above mentioned, *for himself*. And if it is suitable that a Christian should pray thus for himself, it must be suitable that he should pray thus for other Christians. Although a Christian has repented and believed and is holy, his repentance, faith and holiness are but begun. He prays that they may be continued and increased. The prayer is perfectly consistent with the attainments of the best man on earth. It is plain then, that Dr. Ware's attempt to prove, from the nature of the Apostle's prayer, that he did not mean to address the saints at Ephesus as being true Christians, already grounded in love, is entirely unsuccessful; since no prayer could have been more proper, on supposition of their *being* true Christians.

Dr. Ware allows that the prayer, above referred to, is very suitable to be offered up for "professed believers as a promiscuous body." He doubtless means the whole body of professing believers, including the sincere as well as the hypocritical. Cer-

tainly he cannot mean that sincere Christians are to be excepted. But if they are not to be excepted, then the prayer is suitable in relation to them. Prayer cannot be properly offered up for a promiscuous body, unless those who compose that body have something in common, on account of which the same prayer is suited to them all. In the case before us, those for whom the prayer was offered had common wants. Whether they were all sincere Christians or not, they all needed what the Apostle supplicated for them. So that the prayer would have been perfectly proper, had they *all* been truly sanctified. And none the less proper, on supposition they were "certainly chosen to eternal life." Could such a choice prevent their needing the blessings of the gospel? If, because men are chosen to eternal life, they do not need the blessings mentioned in the Apostle's prayer, then they do not need conversion, or faith, or any other blessing, — not even that very eternal life to which they are chosen. What dream of Antinomianism was ever so strange as this?

But Dr. Ware says, the Apostle "thinks it proper to exhort these same persons to walk worthy of their vocation, to put off the old man, and put on the new man, and not to grieve the Spirit." — "Very suitable to be addressed to the *promiscuous body of professing Christians;* — very suitable, if by saints, chosen, predestinated, this only were meant; but certainly not so, if by these terms were designated persons chosen from eternity to final salvation, and already saints and faithful in the highest and literal sense. Such, as distinguished from the rest of the world, are not proper subjects of exhortation to walk worthy of the Christian vocation."

But I ask why they are not proper subjects of such exhortation? Is it not the *duty* of *all* men to walk worthy of the Christian vocation? And can it cease to be the duty of any, because they are already real saints, and are chosen to salvation? God has chosen them, *that they should be holy.* Can this release them from the *obligation* to be holy? The grace of God, in choosing men to salvation and in making them saints, is represented by the apostles as a motive to duty, not as a reason for neglecting it.

Now if walking worthy of their vocation is the *duty* of those who are chosen to salvation and are already saints; then clearly it is proper that they should be *exhorted* to walk thus. For to what can the Scriptures more properly exhort men, than to do their *duty?*

But we may take another view. If God has determined to bring men to final salvation, he has determined to do it by certain means. These means are repentance, faith, and increasing, persevering holiness. But these are *active duties of rational moral agents.* Men must perform them *as moral agents.* And *as moral agents* they must be *excited* to perform them. But how are moral agents excited to perform duty, but by exhortations, commands, promises, and threats? Now do men cease to be moral agents, because they are "already saints in the literal sense?" Dr. Ware's reasoning implies that they do. If he would allow that they continue to be moral agents, he must allow it to be proper that they should be *treated* as moral agents, and be exhorted and commanded to do their duty. He thinks "they cannot be exhorted to be renewed, — because by the supposition their renewal is already certain." But suppose it is certain that they are renewed, that is, that their renewal is begun; is it not necessary that it should be continued and increased? Because they have *begun* to obey, is their increasing and persevering obedience unnecessary? But if persevering obedience is necessary, they must be influenced to it, and must be influenced by motives. I spoke of *active* duties. To put off the old man, and put on the new man, to be strengthened by the Spirit in the inner man, etc., is to love God with increasing ardor, and obey with increasing constancy and delight. What in the creation can be more active than this? But Christians cannot be active without active powers; and they cannot exert their active powers in doing their duty, without motives; and what better motives can be used with them, than the exhortations and warnings of Scripture?

Dr. Ware says, renewal, being certain, "is what they have no power either to prevent, or to bring about." But does it follow,

that because it is *certain* a man *has* acted or *will* act in a particular way, he has *no power* to act thus, and no power to act otherwise? Christ's word rendered it very certain, that Peter would deny him, and Judas betray him. But did that certainty take away their power to do what they did, or to refrain from it? Dr. Ware asks, "And with what propriety can such," that is, those who are already saints and chosen to eternal life, "be exhorted not to grieve the Spirit of God?" I answer, with the same propriety that they can be exhorted to avoid any sin, or perform any duty. I answer again, that the Apostle makes the very consideration, that those whom he addresses *are holy*, and that they are the objects of God's special favor, a motive to *enforce* such exhortations. He tells them they are the temple of the Holy Ghost; that they are the members of Christ, and are not their own; and makes use of this as a reason for glorifying God by a pure and holy life. See 1 Cor. 6: 15—20. 2 Cor. 6: 16, 17. So in other places, the very consideration, that men are Christians indeed and that God has conferred so great a blessing upon them as to make them heirs of heaven, is urged as a powerful motive to gratitude and obedience. And a powerful motive it must surely be, if our being real Christians and heirs of an eternal inheritance is to be regarded as a blessing of any value.

The further I proceed, the more am I satisfied of the mistake of Dr. Ware, in supposing that the divine purpose, which makes any future character or action of men *certain*, is inconsistent with their moral agency, or with the proper influence of motives. This supposition, which mixes itself more or less with the reasoning of those who oppose the doctrine of the divine purposes, may, I think, be proved and has been proved to be both false and absurd, by arguments which no man is able to invalidate.

Dr. Ware thinks that a similar method of investigation to that which was applied to the passage in Ephesians, will convince his readers, "that Rom. ix. has no relation to an Election to eternal life." The candid reader must decide whether his method of investigation serves his purpose, in respect either to that passage

or this. In relation to Rom. ix, I have scarcely anything to add to my reasoning in my Letters, which, in its main points, Dr. Ware has not even attempted to confute. Most of what he says about the general scope of the first part of the Epistle is doubtless correct. What then? Does that disprove the doctrine of Election? No more than it disproves anything else. As to national distinctions and religious privileges, I have already expressed my views. If Unitarians will consider the real influence of religious privileges, and the momentous consequences of the distinction which God has made respecting them upon the character and future condition of men; they may find as great difficulty in what Dr. Ware has said respecting Jacob and Esau, as in the orthodox doctrine.

Dr. Ware admits what I advanced in my Letters, that the reflection of the Apostle, on the case of Jacob and Esau, v. 16, implies a general principle of the divine government, but thinks it must be confined to cases similar to that of Jacob and Esau, and that it cannot relate to *final salvation*. But it seems clear to me, that the whole reasoning of the Apostle *makes* it relate to final salvation, and that, without such a relation, his reasoning is weakness itself. For he shows, as Dr. Ware remarks, that those distinctions on which the Jews valued themselves, *were done away*. If the particular distinction he speaks of had been of the same nature with these, he would have said at once, *it is ended*. But he shows that a real distinction is *still made* among men, and justifies God in making it. What was that distinction? Not a national one — not one in regard to religious privileges; for that was done away. It must have been a distinction *then existing*,— a distinction with which *the Jews would find fault*, but which *Paul would justify*. It must have been a distinction, which would answer the account the Apostle gave of it, a distinction between the children of the flesh and the children of God; between those who were fitted to destruction, and those prepared unto glory. What distinction was this? I hope when Dr. Ware shall find time to review his remarks on this subject, he will keep in mind, that the Apostle spoke of a distinction then really exist-

ing, a distinction which was offensive to the Jews, but which he meant to justify. He first brings the distinction into view, v. 6, "They are not all Israel who are of Israel." This distinction between true saints and those who had merely the name and external privileges of saints, he illustrates and justifies by the distinction once made between Isaac and Ishmael, and between Jacob and Esau; and then by what God said to Moses, asserting his sovereign right to have mercy on whom he will, in another case; v. 15, referring to Exod. 33: 19; and again by what he said of Pharaoh, affirming that he raised him up for the purposes of his glory, as Dr. Ware sets it forth, p. 78. — Now mark well, it is *immediately upon this* the Apostle affirms, that God exercised the right of *hardening whom he would*, and this *in opposition* to showing them *mercy*. This he represented as a distinction then actually made, and against which he knew the Jews would raise such objections as he mentions, v. 19, though they would be far enough from raising them against that external, national distinction which they had always gloried in, but which was then done away. This was the very distinction which the Apostle defends in the following verses, where he speaks of God's making *of the same lump some vessels to honor, and others to dishonor*, and where, with his eye upon the same subject, he speaks of *vessels of mercy prepared unto glory, and vessels of wrath fitted to destruction*. And finally; it was to this distinction, *then actually existing, — then objected to by the pride of Jews*, but *defended by the Apostle*, it was to *this distinction* the Apostle applied that general principle of the divine administration, which he vindicated by referring to the distinction formerly made between Jacob and Esau.

With these remarks, I leave this interesting passage to the consideration of the attentive reader, especially to the biblical critic.

As to the difference, which Dr. Ware mentions, between my statement of the doctrine of Reprobation, and the statement generally made by the orthodox, I have but a word to say. To what, then, does the difference amount? I represented the decree of Reprobation to be, "the determination of God to punish the dis-

obedient *for their* sins, and *according to their deserts.*" The Assembly of Divines say, in regard to the non-elect, "God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, etc., to pass by them, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath, *for their sin*, to the praise of his glorious justice." If it is to the praise of his *justice*, it must be, as I stated, not only *for* their sin, but *according* to it. Now, in reality, what difference is there between God's determining to punish the finally disobedient for their sins, and his passing by the same persons and ordaining them to dishonor and wrath for their sins?

The last paragraph of Letter IV, displays a frankness and kindness of heart, which I love to acknowledge and to honor in my opponent, and which I will ever strive to copy; though in this case their exercise is attended with misapprehension. Dr. Ware seems to suppose that I shrink from the doctrine of Reprobation, because I find it cannot be defended consistently with the moral character of God, or that I think it desirable to keep out of view the most offensive feature of Calvinism. But this is not exactly the case. I do indeed think the doctrine has often been stated injudiciously and harshly, and that it is very liable to be *understood* in a manner, which really makes it inconsistent with the character of God. And this is the reason why I deem it necessary to state it with peculiar caution. A subject may be put into such a posture in the minds of those whom we address, that whatever we say concerning it, will be in danger of being perverted or misapplied. When we are apprised that this is the case, we ought certainly to be very guarded in our language, and to take special care to bring into view those parts of the subject which are apt to be overlooked. This is what I have attempted to do. My object is not to *conceal* the truth, but to make an exhibition of it which shall be just and Scriptural, and which shall, if possible, be so well guarded, that men can find nothing in it to oppose, except the *truth itself*.

I am happy that Dr. Ware exhibits none of the violence, bitterness, or scurrility, with which many oppose this doctrine; though he is not wanting in zeal. But when I soberly consider the real

nature of the doctrine against which he and others make such strenuous opposition, I hardly know what to say. It would seem as though creatures of yesterday, as we are, instead of wishing to limit the extent of Jehovah's dominion, would rejoice in the highest degree of sovereignty which he can exercise. It is true, there are reasons enough against our committing our eternal or even our temporal interests absolutely to the will of man. But is not the infinite perfection of God sufficient to secure our implicit and unlimited confidence in his administration? And if he tells us in his word, that *he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy;* that is, exercises a sovereign control over our character and destiny; why should we not say, Amen, being fully persuaded that a Being of infinite wisdom and goodness will, in all respects, do right? Why should we not cheerfully say, the Lord reigneth and doeth all things after the counsel of his own will; since the more extensive his dominion, the safer are the interests of the universe?

CHAPTER X.

All that I can do on the subject of Atonement is, to give a statement of Dr. Ware's scheme, and make a few general remarks upon it.

Dr. Ware says: "Christ was our Redeemer by those miracles, which proved him to be a messenger and teacher from God; by those instructions and that example, which were to remove our ignorance, and deliver us from the slavery of sin; by those high motives to repentance and holiness, which are found in the revelation of a future life and righteous retribution, and the persuasive efficacy given to his example by his sufferings, etc." "Christ's sufferings are the means of delivering us from punishment, only as they are instrumental in delivering us from the

dominion of sin. They are the grounds of our forgiveness, only as they are the means of bringing us to repentance, only as they operate to bring us to that state of holiness, which has the promise of forgiveness, and qualifies us for it." "Christ's being made a curse for us redeemed us from the curse of the law, by its influence in bringing us back to repentance."

The same views are expressed in a sermon of Dr. Ware, and still more largely in Dr. John Taylor's treatise on the atonement.

Although this notion of atonement, redemption, etc., is affirmed with as much confidence as it could be, if it were supported by the strongest evidence, and were perfectly free from difficulty; I must be allowed to pause awhile before receiving it, and to state briefly some of the objections which seem to lie against it.

First. Dr. Ware's scheme *assumes, that there is nothing to hinder the forgiveness of sinners, but their continuance in sin;* that it is an established principle of God's moral government, that *repentance* shall put an end to the consequences of sin.

Now I ask, in the first place, whether *the divine law* supports such a principle. The law promises a reward for obedience, and threatens a penalty for disobedience. But where does it give us the least hint, that repentance will set aside the penalty? Should we expect this from *the nature of the case?* Suppose transgressors repent. Does that alter the guilt of their past transgression? Does God therefore cease to look upon past transgression with displeasure? "We may as well affirm," says a learned Divine, "that our former obedience atones for our present sins, as that our present obedience makes amends for antecedent transgressions." But if the guilt of past transgression remains the same as before, and God looks upon it with the same displeasure; how will he do justice to his own character, or to the principles of his moral government, if in his conduct he *shows* no displeasure? How is it with a civil government? Does it hold out to criminals the prospect of pardon in case they repent? What would be the consequence if it should? But the consequence of such a principle in the divine government would be as much more dreadful,

as the interests of the divine government are more important, and require to be more watchfully guarded, than those of any human government.

We may learn something on this subject from the analogy of God's government in the present world. "In the common occurrences of life, the man who, by the practice of vice, has injured his character, his fortune, and his health, does not find himself instantly restored to the full enjoyment of these blessings on repenting of his past misconduct. Now if the attributes of the Deity demand, that the punishment should not outlive the crime, on what ground shall we justify this temporal dispensation? The difference in *degree* cannot affect the question in the least. It matters not, whether the punishment be of long or short duration; whether in this world or in the next. If the justice or the goodness of God require that punishment should not be inflicted, when repentance has taken place; it must be a violation of those attributes to permit any punishment whatever, the most slight or the most transient. Nor will it avail to say, that the evils of *this life* attendant upon vice, are the effects of an established constitution, and follow in the way of natural consequence. Is not that established constitution itself the effect of the divine decree? And are not its several operations as much the appointment of its Almighty framer, as if they had individually flowed from his immediate direction? But besides, what reason have we to suppose that God's treatment of us in a future state will not be of the same nature as we find it in this; according to established rules, and in the way of natural consequence?"* Is it then consistent with reason and propriety to assume, without proof, that nothing could ever hinder the forgiveness of sin, but impenitence? Were there no appearances *directly against* this assumption, I should think it altogether unsafe to adopt it, without positive evidence in its favor. For even if *civil* government could always grant forgiveness to offenders on their repentance; and if under the divine administration in the present life repentance should be found to put an immediate end to the visible conse-

* Magee.

quences of particular sins; how could we certainly conclude that the Governor of the world will not judge it best to guard the *everlasting* interests of his kingdom by higher sanctions? How could we certainly conclude, that rebels would find no other obstacle, besides their impenitence, in the way of final impunity? I should certainly charge myself with inexcusable temerity, if, without the best evidence, I should venture to decide on a subject so vast and incomprehensible. And further; if we would be secure against a wrong judgment in this case, we must not forget that we are ourselves transgressors, and as such, are extremely liable to be blinded by self-interest, and to adopt any opinion favorable to our wishes, though ever so destitute of evidence.

I have not intended by anything which has now been advanced, to admit, that repentance could ever have taken place under the moral government of God, if no atonement had been made. Indeed there is no more reason to think that any instance of repentance would have been found among apostate men, than among the apostate angels, had not salvation been provided through an atonement. The supposition of repentance, without regard to an atonement, has been intended merely to assist in the investigation of principles.

Secondly. *Dr. Ware's scheme assumes, that the words redemption, sacrifice, etc., have the same signification when applied to the work of Christ, as they have in the few passages he has selected, where they relate to other subjects and are obviously used in a very different sense.* Dr. Ware finds a few places, where *redemption* denotes mere deliverance from temporal judgments, without any price being paid. And these examples of the use of the term, he says, "may lead us to some just notions of its meaning, when it is said, we have redemption by the blood of Christ." "He redeemed us by his blood, as the children of Israel were redeemed by the mighty power of God." Now is it consistent with sound principles of interpretation, to take it for granted, that because the word *redeem* is *sometimes* used in this secondary and imperfect sense, in relation to deliverance from temporal

evils, it is used in the same sense in relation to the eternal salvation of sinners? Is this to be taken for granted, when the Bible itself makes a most obvious and important difference, representing the deliverance of men from temporal bondage to be effected by the mere exercise of God's power, but representing expressly, and in various forms, that redemption from eternal destruction by divine power is *through the blood of Christ*, *through the death of a Mediator*, and ascribing the whole of salvation to this, as the great means of procuring it? How can we reason from one case to the other, when the Scripture represents them as so widely different?

I have the same general remarks as to *sacrifice.* I admit the word is sometimes used in a very imperfect sense, denoting a mere offering to God of prayer or praise, penitence or obedience. But upon what principle can Dr. Ware draw from this unusual and imperfect sense of the word, the broad conclusion, that it is in a similar sense, "that sacrifice is applied to whatever was done by Jesus Christ for our benefit?" Because such is the meaning *sometimes*, does it follow that it is so *here?* This I state as a serious objection against the scheme of my opponent, that it overlooks the proper method of determining the meaning of the words *redemption*, *sacrifice*, etc., as they are applied to the work of Christ, and rests on the assumption, that their meaning here is similar to what it is in a few texts, where the words have a very unusual and imperfect sense.

Thirdly. The scheme of Dr. Ware *denies the obvious sense of many passages of Scripture which relate to the subject, and gives them a meaning which is unnatural and forced.* Without supposing that Unitarians have a preconceived opinion which they wish to support, I am not able to account for it, that they should interpret the word of God as they do. The passages which assert a real atonement are too many to be repeated here. The Scriptures declare that Christ is "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world; that he hath given himself for us an offering and sacrifice to God; that he is the propitiation for our sins; that he died for us; that he redeemed us from the curse, being made

a curse for us; that we are forgiven through his blood, etc." If such declarations as these do not teach the common doctrine of the atonement, nothing can. These texts assert it in language as plain and express, as any which can be imagined. To say they do not teach the doctrine, seems to me about the same as saying, the inspired writers could not teach it if they would. But this scheme not only denies the plain meaning of Scripture, but gives it a meaning exceedingly unnatural and strange. When Scripture declares that we have "redemption through Christ's blood, even the forgiveness of sins," Unitarians make it mean, that his blood promotes our *repentance*. When Scripture declares that Christ died for us, and is the propitiation for our sins; Unitarians make it mean merely that his sufferings confirmed his doctrines, and are instrumental in delivering us from the dominion of sin. When Scripture declares, that Christ became a curse for us to redeem us from the curse of the law; Unitarians will have it, that this is only asserting its influence to bring us back to repentance. Now let men of sober sense collect the passages of Scripture which relate to the work of redemption by Christ, and set them down on one side; and the passages from Dr. Ware's Letters, which exhibit the Unitarian doctrine, and set them down on the other side, and then compare them, and see if there is any likeness between them.

Fourthly. The Unitarian scheme *takes away the difference which the Scripture uniformly makes between the sufferings of Christ, and of his apostles.* If the sufferings and death of Christ are really nothing more than Dr. Ware makes them; they are in no sense distinguishable from the sufferings and death of Paul. Who can say, that Paul did not give as much and as valuable instruction, as Jesus did? or that he did not as really confirm his doctrines by his miracles, his sufferings and death? Dr. Ware says, "Christ was our redeemer by those miracles which proved him to be a messenger and teacher from God; by those instructions and that example which were to remove our ignorance, and deliver us from the slavery of sin; by those high motives to repentance and holiness, which are found in the revelation of a future

life and righteous retribution; and especially by the confirmation his doctrines and promises received, and the persuasive efficacy given to his example by his sufferings, his voluntary death, and his resurrection. Now in all these ways, except resurrection, Paul was as really a redeemer, as Jesus Christ. Why then is it not proper to speak of the redemption that is in PAUL, to celebrate the efficacy of his death, and to ascribe to it the forgiveness of sin? According to the above statement of Dr. Ware's opinion, there is not a single point of dissimilitude between the work of Christ as redeemer, and the work of Paul, excepting the resurrection. If Dr. Ware's opinion is true, I am unable to see why it would not be as proper to say of Paul, as of Christ; "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world; — he is the propitiation for our sins; — we have redemption through his blood." But the Bible does not speak thus of Paul.

Attend particularly to the manner in which the Scripture speaks of Christ, compared with the manner in which it speaks of prophets and apostles. Here we have a test of truth, less liable to be misapplied, than perhaps any other. Suppose I doubt as to the meaning of those passages, which assert in direct terms, that Christ offered himself a sacrifice for sin; that he died for us, and redeemed us by his blood. I go then to other passages, particularly those in which the inspired writers freely express their feelings with respect to Christ, their gratitude for his kindness, their estimation of the work he performed, their reliance on his death, and their ascriptions of glory to him as a Redeemer. I then ask, whether this expression of feeling on the part of prophets and apostles agrees best with the views of the orthodox, or of Unitarians, respecting the *other* passages? Does it agree best with the notion, that the influence of Christ's death was like the influence of Paul's death? or with the orthodox doctrine, that Christ's death was vicarious, and had an influence essentially different from that of any other?

Finally. I compare *the moral influence of the two systems.* Dr. Ware says, Christ's sufferings "are instrumental in delivering us from the dominion of sin;"—"they are the means of bringing

us to repentance;"—"they operate to bring us to that state of holiness, which has the promise of forgiveness, and qualifies us for it." My position is, first, that Christ's sufferings and death, as the orthodox regard them, have the *same influence*. According to Unitarians, Christ's sufferings and death *confirm his doctrines and promises, and give a persuasive efficacy to his example.* They do the same according to our views. And orthodox writers have described this influence abundantly and with great force.

But my position goes further. The sufferings of Christ, according to our scheme, have the same influence *in a far higher degree.* I mean, that the sufferings of Christ, as apprehended by the orthodox, have a more powerful influence to lead sinners to repentance, than as they are apprehended by Unitarians. What are the motives which lead sinners to repentance? Certainly one of these is, *the evil of sin*, and *the abhorrence with which God regards it.* But these are made to appear much greater according to our scheme of the atonement, than according to the other. The sufferings of Christ, as we view them, are *a direct and unequalled display* of the evil of sin, and the abhorrence with which God regards it. They are intended primarily for this very purpose. And we believe they really answer this purpose in as high a degree as would have been answered, by God's inflicting upon sinners the whole penalty of the law. But as viewed by Unitarians, they are intended for no such purpose. Now surely that scheme of the atonement which gives the clearest view of the evil of sin, and the displeasure of God against it, must have the most powerful tendency to lead men to repentance. This is plain. I might say the same in regard to the penalty of the law, or the *punishment* which sin deserves, as manifested by the death of Christ. To those who receive the orthodox doctrine, the death of Christ shows the dreadfulness of that punishment in the most striking light. But to Unitarians it does not show it at all. Again; to those who receive the orthodox doctrine, the death of Christ exhibits a far higher degree of divine love and mercy, than to Unitarians. These acknowledge indeed, that the death of Christ showed divine

love by giving confirmation to his doctrines, authority to his precepts, and a persuasive influence to his example. But according to our views of the subject, the divine love was in another way much more gloriously displayed. For there was a mighty obstacle to forgiveness, which no penitence, obedience or suffering of sinners could ever remove. But God, "for the great love wherewith he loved us," removed that obstacle by providing a vicarious sacrifice, or by sending his Son to die *for us*. At such a vast expense, the love of God purchased our forgiveness. This divine love, so often celebrated in the Scriptures, is a grand motive to repentance. While it shows sinners their inexcusable wickedness, it forbids their despair, encourages their hopes and their efforts, melts their hearts with pious grief, and attracts them to obedience. Thus it becomes obvious, that our doctrine invests the sufferings of Christ with a power to lead sinners to repentance, greatly superior to any which can be derived from the doctrine of Unitarians. The death of Christ then, according to our doctrine, has the *same kind of moral influence*, which it has according to Dr. Ware's scheme, and has it in a far *superior degree;* besides the other and higher ends which it answers, in relation to the perfections and government of God and the interests of his kingdom.

I think it unnecessary to remark on all the particular passages in Dr. Ware's fifth Letter, which seem to me erroneous. I shall merely glance at a few of them.

I have been not a little surprised at Dr. Ware's saying, that I have not explained the figurative language, commonly used respecting the work of Christ. But I have been most of all surprised, that he should charge me with mixing the literal with the metaphorical sense. The deliverance of a captive by the payment of a *pecuniary price*, is redemption in the *literal* sense. But the procuring of a sinner's *spiritual* deliverance by an expedient of a *moral* nature, is redemption in a *metaphorical* sense. To make the sense of the word *metaphorical*, it is not necessary that the *spiritual* deliverance should be procured *without any means whatever*, nor without means which are equivalent, in a moral view, to

the execution of the penalty of the law. Nor is it necessary that the means used should have a less intimate connection with the *spiritual* deliverance, than the payment of money has with the deliverance of a captive from *temporal* bondage. It is sufficient to make a perfect metaphor, if a transaction of a *moral* nature is represented under the similitude of a *pecuniary* or *civil* transaction. I said in my Letters; "as the debtor is freed from imprisonment by the friend who steps forward and pays his debt; so are sinners freed from punishment by the Saviour, who shed his blood for them." On this Dr. Ware says, "the payment is as *literal* in the one case as in the other." But how so? It is this representation of the *moral* transaction in language derived from a common transaction in civil life, which constitutes the metaphor. Just so the representation of God's pouring out his Spirit, or raining down righteousness, is a metaphor taken from the pouring out of rain upon the earth. The metaphor in both cases is perfect. If in the case above referred to, Dr. Ware had said, the payment in one case is *an important reality*, as well as in the other, he would have said the exact truth. The metaphorical language employed is so far from rendering the meaning of Scripture obscure or doubtful, that it gives it greater clearness and force.

It is no valid objection to the metaphorical language which the Scriptures use, and other similar language, on the subject of redemption, that it has been the occasion of mistake. It would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to avoid the use of metaphors on such a subject. And if we could do this, it would have a most unhappy effect. The fact is, that in most cases, if we confine ourselves to language which is wholly free from a figurative sense, we cannot convey the truth so as to make a just impression on the minds of others. The importance and necessity of metaphorical language on moral and religious subjects, result from the very constitution of our nature. And Unitarians have no more right to expect that we shall lay aside the use of metaphors on the subject of redemption, than on other subjects. It is admitted, that some men will misunderstand the metaphorical language now under consideration. They will also misunderstand the metaphors

by which other divine truths are illustrated. Even the texts which represent God as having hands and eyes, have by some men been understood literally, and are often understood so now, especially by children. But shall we on this account cease to speak of the hand of God, to denote his active power, or the eyes of God to denote his knowledge? And shall we cease to pray, "forgive us our debts," because our sins are not *pecuniary* debts? Or when we use such metaphors in religious discourse, or in prayer, must we always stop to explain them?

Dr. Ware speaks of our "charging Unitarians with denying or explaining away the doctrine of atonement, for the very reason that they explain the language in question as figurative." But he has quite mistaken our meaning. We do not charge Unitarians with error, because they explain the language *as figurative*, but because they do not give to the *figurative* language its *true* and *obvious sense*. Just so we should do in other like cases. When the Scriptures assert that "the eyes of God are in every place," we say the language implies that God is *omniscient*. But if, because it is a metaphor, any one should deny that it denotes a knowledge or discernment in God answering to natural vision in us; we should charge him with denying an important truth, not because he considered the language *metaphorical*, but because he denied the *obvious meaning* of the metaphor. In explaining those texts which speak of our being *bought with a price*, we assert that they denote something in the work of redemption by Christ, which really answers to the price which is paid for the deliverance of a slave or captive; and we are fully satisfied that we are right, when we find that the Bible describes to us *the very thing* which is called the *price*, that is, *the death of Christ*, and that many texts both of a figurative and literal sense, represent that death as the means of forgiveness and salvation to sinners.

In my Letters I signified, what I honestly apprehended to be true, that the denial of the doctrine of atonement is "contrary to the humble spirit of Christian faith." Dr. Ware seems to think it would follow from this, that "it is unsafe to allow ourselves to inquire about the doctrine." But how would this follow? He

would doubtless unite with us in saying, that the denial of *the divine existence* is contrary to the humble spirit of Christian faith, and clearly shows the want of moral virtue. But would this imply, that it is unsafe to inquire into the subject of the divine existence? We should deem it important in such a case, to persuade men to inquire with the greatest diligence; though we should regard it as a sorrowful indication of character if they should not be convinced. So we consider it contrary to the humble spirit of Christian faith to deny the authority of the Scriptures. But is it therefore unsafe to inquire into the subject? Free inquiry, properly conducted, is important on all subjects; because it is a means of discovering the truth. But if the truth fails of being discovered; it becomes a serious question, whether the failure is owing to the want of evidence, or to something wrong in the state of the mind.

Dr. Ware says, that the Scriptures, "without any reference to any kind of atonement, refer the forgiveness of sin solely to the mercy of God, by which he is ready to accept reformation and a return to virtue." His meaning undoubtedly is, that the Scriptures do this in many instances. This then is the reasoning. The Scriptures, in many places, speak of God as merciful, and ready to forgive the penitent, *without expressly referring to any atonement;* therefore forgiveness rests *solely* on the *mercy of God* and the *repentance of sinners*, and the atonement has nothing to do with it, except as it may be conducive to repentance. But what would Dr. Ware say, if I should reason in the same manner? The Scriptures in some places speak of the *death of Christ* as the cause or means of our forgiveness, without any mention of repentance or holiness in us; therefore the death of Christ is the *sole* cause and means of our forgiveness, and neither our repentance, nor the mercy of God has anything to do with it. Or thus. In some passages the Scriptures attribute our forgiveness and salvation to *faith*, without mentioning either the mercy of God, or the blood of Christ; therefore *faith* is the *only* cause or foundation of our forgiveness, and neither the mercy of God nor the blood of Christ has anything to do with it. To just such conclusions

shall we be led, if we attempt to learn the whole truth on the subjects of religion, from any particular passages, while we disregard other passages containing additional information.

There are indeed many texts, which declare God's readiness to forgive those who repent. But we find too that a propitiation for sin was appointed from the beginning, and that the appointed propitiation, which was set forth in the Mosaic law by various sacrifices, had the same influence respecting human salvation before the coming of Christ, as after. What that influence was, we learn most clearly from the New Testament. When all parts of Scripture are taken together, it becomes perfectly clear, that every declaration of God's readiness to forgive the penitent, *presupposes* the propitiation made by the death of Christ. Now it is certainly a violation of just principles of reasoning, to separate the declaration of God's readiness to forgive from the consideration of that atonement, which he appointed from the beginning as the medium of forgiveness. Whether the two things are always mentioned in the same passage or not, they are both mentioned in the holy Scriptures. These Scriptures we receive entire; and we learn from them, *first*, that the infinite love of God was the original fountain of salvation; *secondly*, that the sacrifice of Christ was the grand expedient adopted by the Governor of the world, to render human salvation, which would otherwise have been wholly inadmissible, consistent with law and justice; and *thirdly*, that the repentance of sinners is indispensably necessary to their enjoying the salvation thus graciously provided. So that when we assert that the blood of Christ is, in one respect, the sole ground of forgiveness, we do not, as Dr. Ware supposes, forget those texts which attribute forgiveness to the free and boundless love of God, nor those which represent repentance as an indispensable condition of forgiveness.

Dr. Ware has misapprehended my meaning as to the entire worthlessness of all the good works and dispositions of men. What I said related simply to *justification*. But because good works and good dispositions are worthless in regard to *this single point*, we do by no means consider them worthless in other re-

spects. Although we believe, what Paul abundantly teaches in his epistles, that our good works must never be named in the presence of God, as the meritorious cause of our justification; I am confident we consider them of as high value, and enforce them by as many and as powerful motives, as any of our opponents; and with perfect consistency too. For it can never be shown, that, because our personal holiness is of no account *as a ground of our justification*, it is therefore of no estimation whatever in the sight of God, and not worthy of our pursuit. Does our denying the value of a thing in *one* respect, prove that we deny its value in all other respects?

CHAPTER XI.

ON DIVINE INFLUENCE.

Most of what Dr. Ware has said, Letter VI, in regard to the use of means and motives, is perfectly agreeable to the faith of the orthodox. And let me inquire, what reason he has to suppose, that the special, the efficacious, or even the supernatural influence of the Spirit, which we believe to be concerned in regeneration, has any less connection with means and motives, than that divine influence which he asserts. We make the peculiar character which we attribute to the divine influence to consist, not at all in its setting aside the use of means and rational motives, but *in its giving them their proper effect*, or *producing its own proper effect by them*. And one would think, that a divine influence which renders means and motives *effectual* to bring men to repentance, must be more highly valued, than any influence which falls short of this. It seems to me very strange, that any man should not see at once, that the influence of God's Spirit must be desirable and excellent *in proportion to its efficacy*, or in proportion to the certainty with which it produces its saving effect.

Dr. Ware justly represents our different views respecting divine influence, as intimately connected with our views respecting the natural state of man. Now if our views of man's depravity are admitted to be correct, our opponents must be satisfied, that just such a divine influence as we assert, is necessary to his renovation, and that no influence short of this would answer the purpose. They now think a less powerful influence sufficient, because they think man less depraved. Should they ever be convinced, that man has that degree of moral corruption which we attribute to him, they would at the same time be convinced, that he cannot be brought to a holy life, without a divine influence sufficient to overcome a strong and total opposition to holiness, and to effect a new moral creation.

Dr. Ware asserts that our notion of divine influence is inconsistent with human liberty and activity, — inconsistent with the moral character of God — with those texts which complain of the sins of men, — with the commands of the gospel to repent and believe, and with the sincerity of all the exhortations and encouragements given to men. But of this inconsistency, what evidence has he produced? And what evidence can he produce? Our doctrine is, that the divine influence *effectually directs* and *regulates* the liberty and activity of those who are saved; that it induces them to use their voluntary and moral powers in a right manner. Now is it *setting aside* their liberty or activity, for the Spirit of God to *direct* it, to *regulate* its operations, and to induce them properly to use it? Dr. Ware says, that "in those, upon whom this influence is exerted, its effects take place without any agency or coöperation of theirs, for they are wholly passive." But although something like this seems, in some instances, to have been maintained by the orthodox; I can by no means assent to it. The subjects operated upon by the divine Spirit, are *active, moral beings;* and the visible effects produced in them are, primarily, *right moral affections*, and secondarily, correspondent *external actions*. Now can *these* "effects take place, without any agency of theirs," when the known effects are in fact *their agency itself*, properly directed?

And how can it be supposed to be inconsistent with the moral character of God, for him to exert an influence upon sinners, which will certainly secure their repentance and salvation? Should we not rather think, that a Being of infinite goodness would choose to exert an influence, so important to the highest interests of men? If there is any difficulty in the case, it is, that so desirable an influence is not imparted to all. But as to this, I hardly need to remark, that no blessing which God bestows, is ever thought to lose its value, because it is not bestowed on all. Nor, on the other hand, is there any room for those who are left destitute, to find fault, unless they can present a just claim to the blessings withheld. So far this subject is very plain.

Again. Is our doctrine "inconsistent with those texts which complain of the sins of men?" The reason which Dr. Ware assigns to prove such an inconsistency is, that if our doctrine is true, "men act according to the nature given them, and could not act otherwise without an influence which is not given them." The first part of the reason here assigned is, that if our doctrine is true, "men act according to the nature given them." And how do they act if the Unitarian doctrine is true? The other part of the reason is, that "men could not act otherwise, without an influence which is not given them." They "*could not* act otherwise." But are men destitute of any power which is necessary to moral agency, because they are not made holy? If they are not, then this reason has no force. If they are, then those who are not holy, have not the power which is necessary to moral agency; which is the same as to say, *sinners* cannot be *moral agents*. And this is the same as saying that *no moral agents* can be *sinners*.

Finally; Dr. Ware signifies that our doctrine is inconsistent with the sincerity of the exhortations and encouragements of the gospel, since it supposes men incapable of willing to perform their duty; that it is not of themselves to will anything good. But our doctrine makes men no otherwise incapable of willing to perform their duty, than as they are wholly *indisposed* or *disinclined* to perform it. And must the exhortations to duty con-

tained in the gospel, and the promises to those who perform it, be considered insincere, because men are *not inclined* to perform it? If so, there is but little sincerity in the Bible.

Dr. Ware's last Letter relates particularly to the moral influence of orthodoxy compared with the influence of Unitarianism. To many of the remarks contained in this Letter, I cordially subscribe; but not to all.

"Love to Christ," he says, "will depend on our view of the nature and value of the benefits we receive through him, and not at all on the rank he holds in the scale of being." This is saying, that our love to Christ will be the same, both in kind and degree, whether he be possessed of mere *human* perfection, or of *divine* perfection. And this is the same as to say, that *human* perfection is entitled to as high a regard, as *divine*. And if this is true, it is of no consequence that we should consider the Supreme Being as anything more than a holy man; as our "*love* to him will not depend at all on the rank he holds in the scale of being." Of course, all the labor of the inspired writers to invest his character with *divine* glory is of no value, as it can have no effect upon our feelings. Indeed, if Dr. Ware's remark is true, it is no more proper to require us to love *God* with all the heart and soul and mind and strength, than to require us to love a perfectly holy *man* in this manner; for whether he holds a higher or lower rank, our love, our veneration and worship should be the same. On this principle, the practice of the Romish church in rendering divine worship to the mother of Jesus, is not so faulty as Protestants have supposed; inasmuch as the propriety of this worship "depends not at all on the rank she holds in the scale of being." Such is the position of Unitarians — a position hastily adopted, and confounding things which differ as much, as any one thing can differ from another. What effect must it have upon us, to be told in earnest, that it is a matter of no practical consequence, whether our Saviour is the Creator of the heavens and

the earth, or a mere creature,— God over all, or a mere child of Adam; that, whether he is the one or the other, our love, our confidence and our worship are to be the same?

But I have a word more on this point. If Unitarians do indeed think that "love to Christ depends not at all on the rank he holds in the scale of being;" why do they charge us with giving him too high a place in our affections? According to Dr. Ware's position, Christ deserves as high an affection, as if he were exalted to the rank of *divinity*. To say he does not, is to say that the degree of our affection must depend on his rank in the scale of being. Indeed, Dr. Ware himself really *makes* it depend on this. He tells us, that Unitarians cannot give Christ the "*supremacy of affection* which is due to God only;" and that they cannot do this, because they ascribe to Christ, "only derived excellence and a subordinate agency." And this is the same as if he had said, they cannot give him their supreme affection, because he holds the rank of a mere creature; thus making our love to him depend, directly and essentially on the rank he holds in the scale of being. They justify themselves in not giving him their supreme affection, by alleging that he has only the rank of a dependent being. And they are justified, if that *is* his rank. On the other hand, our *supreme* affection is due to him, if he possesses *supreme excellence*. So that nothing can be more contrary to reason or to fact, than the position that "our love to Christ depends not at all on the rank he holds in the scale of being." The question between us and Unitarians respecting the character of Christ, is, in effect, a question respecting the degree of love and veneration which is due to him. And every effort of Unitarians to disprove the proper Deity of Christ, is an effort to convince us, that we have exercised towards him too high a degree of veneration and love. But for ourselves, we are satisfied that our danger is that of falling below the affection which his glorious attributes demand, and which the precepts and examples of the apostles inculcate.

Dr. Ware asks upon what ground I can speak "of a future reward to be obtained by virtuous efforts," since I have said that

no works of ours must be named in the presence of God, and that we must rely on the blood of Christ, as the sole ground of forgiveness. But can there be any difficulty here? May not an undeserved favor, a *mere gift*, which has been procured for us by the kindness of another, be proposed to us, on conditions which we are to fulfil? The rewards of heaven are the rewards of *grace*, — procured wholly by the merit of Christ. But may not our diligent exertion be the means of obtaining them? Suppose a man has servants, who owe him a just debt to a large amount, but, through their own fault, are rendered unable to make any payment. And suppose he is moved by compassion to forgive the debt, and besides this, to provide a charity fund to be disposed of for their benefit. May he not encourage good conduct in them, by making it still depend upon their own exertions, whether they shall receive the gratuity offered them? May not the gratuity be held up as a reward of their good conduct? And if they obtain the reward, must not their hearts be constantly turned towards the generosity of their benefactor? Deep in debt as they are, and depending on the mere kindness of another, will they ever name their exertions as giving them any claim to their reward, or as making it, in any proper sense, a purchase?

Dr. Ware says, that "a *moral* inability is in fact, to all practical purposes, the same as a *natural* inability." A *moral* inability is an inability which results from moral causes. Thus a man's strong disinclination to do any particular duty constitutes a moral inability. But is this strong *disinclination* the same as an inability consisting in the want of physical power? As to "practical purposes," these two kinds of inability are extremely different. The one *constitutes* blame-worthiness; the other *frees* from it. We are criminal in proportion to the one, and exculpated in proportion to the other.

I had represented in my Letters, that the salutary influence of the punishment threatened must be in proportion to the *greatness* of the evil which we apprehend to be involved in it; and upon this principle, had endeavored to show, that the view which the orthodox entertain of the inexpressible greatness and endless dura-

tion of future punishment must have the most powerful tendency to deter men from the commission of sin. The argument which Dr. Ware arrays against this reasoning is, in brief, that such a punishment is obviously disproportioned to the demerit of sin, and so cannot be firmly believed; that the "terror" it excites is so "vague and indistinct, and so mingled with incredulity," as to "destroy its practical effects." But has not Dr. Ware entirely mistaken the real question in debate? When we would ascertain the influence of any particular sentiment, we do not surely look to those who disbelieve and reject it, nor to those who half believe it. Who ever attempted to honor Christianity, by showing its happy influence upon Mohammedans or infidels? When Dr. Ware speaks of the influence of the *Unitarian* doctrine, does he mean to speak of its influence upon those who reject it, or upon those who receive it? No doctrine can produce its proper effect in any other way, than by being cordially *believed.* The influence which any doctrine has, is the same thing as the influence which the *belief* of it has. Let Dr. Ware then come to the question, — what the influence of our doctrine will be upon those who seriously believe it. Let him look into the minds of those, who have so deep an impression of the evil of sin, that endless punishment appears to be its just desert; who as certainly believe that such punishment will be inflicted on the wicked, as that endless happiness will be conferred on the righteous. And let him inquire, what will be the proper effect of the doctrine, thus cordially believed.

But Dr. Ware seems to think it *impossible to believe* the doctrine of endless punishment. Doubtless he speaks of an impossibility which *Unitarians* feel; for he surely would not charge us with insincerity, when we profess to believe the doctrine. Now I admit that Unitarians may find it difficult or impossible to bring themselves to believe the doctrine of endless punishment. With the same habits of thinking on religious subjects which they have, I should find it impossible too. But there can be no doubt that this doctrine would become perfectly credible to Unitarians, if their views of the law and government of God, and the evil of sin,

should be like those which the orthodox entertain. And if they should come really to believe the doctrine, they could easily judge of its influence.

Dr. Ware speaks of the "little success, which has attended all endeavors in modern times to extend the bounds of Christianity, by missions for the conversion of barbarous pagan nations." If Dr. Ware could have the pleasure of being fully acquainted with all the facts which are before the public, and which have been the subject of so much joy, and so much thanksgiving to God, I am persuaded he would adopt very different language. And if he had known the character of *Missionaries* as well as some of us do, he would hardly have descended to notice, except with a sharp rebuke, the disgust or the uncandid surmises of those who are unfriendly to the cause of missions.

To all that Dr. Ware says, of the happy influence of Unitarian sentiments to bring the learned, the wealthy, the refined, and those in exalted stations, to be "efficient friends, and serious professors" of religion, I have only this to reply; that I should most heartily rejoice in such an influence, and wish it increased and perpetuated, could I be well satisfied that the religion, thus promoted in the higher classes of society, is indeed the religion which the inspired pages teach, and which will bear the inspection of him who will judge the world at his coming.

Near the close of his Letters, Dr. Ware expresses some surprise that I should speak of the Unitarian system as "*indeed another gospel.*" But why should he be surprised? Does not everything I have said in the controversy imply a serious conviction of this? And have not the more bold and decided Unitarians in England and America given up all thought of any compromise, and all desire of any alliance, between the two systems? And does not Dr. Ware himself, in his last sentence, plainly signify, that one and only one of these systems is to be considered as the true gospel? "Christians," he says, "will venture to judge between the rival systems, and will take the liberty to decide, each one for himself, whether the gospel, as it is held by Unitarians, or as it is held by Trinitarians and Calvinists, be the *gospel*

of Christ." Now we only ask for ourselves the liberty, which belongs to all. Unitarians judge that their system is the true gospel. We adopt a different conclusion. In regard to this subject, on which we have opinions so diverse, it would be inconsistent with plain truth to pretend that we agree, or to do anything implying an agreement. On other subjects we may agree, and ought to agree. Let there be no interruption of the advantages or pleasures of civil, social, or literary intercourse; no interruption of the offices of kindness, or of the feelings of benevolence. But in regard to the great subject of controversy between us, let us revere conscience and be faithful to the truth. If Unitarians soberly declare, that they regard us as guilty of idolatry in the honor and worship we render to Christ, and that they can have no communion with us; instead of crying out against them for bigotry, we cheerfully allow them the rights of conscience and private judgment, and, in this case, give them the credit of a manly consistency. So on our part, if we declare our serious conviction that their system is *another gospel*, and that it is inconsistent with our allegiance to Christ to have any fellowship with them in the peculiarities of their faith and worship; we request them to extend to us the exercise of the same indulgence and candor, and to suffer us, without reproach, to serve God according to our own consciences.

If Dr. Ware were not so distant from the boasting which has characterized some Unitarians, I should be disposed to animadvert upon a few passages in p. 132, where he says not only that the moral influence of the Unitarian doctrine is "far more certain, and powerful, and salutary, and purifying," than the influence of orthodoxy, but that the virtue of Unitarians "is of a more *pure*, *generous*, and *elevated* kind," than that of their opponents. I cannot bring myself to contest this last point. I doubt whether I ought to bestow upon any virtue, which we are conscious of possessing, the shining honors which Dr. Ware here bestows upon the virtue of Unitarians. But the language he *generally* uses on this subject is humility itself, compared with the inflated encomiums, which some of his brethren have bestowed upon themselves

and upon one another. And let me add here, because I love to honor my opponent, that the severest censures he casts upon us are, as to manner, courtesy and mildness itself, compared with the spirit and language of some who boast of liberality and candor. Excuse me for one more remark, and that is, that I shall think I have not written or lived in vain, if I may contribute in any measure to diminish the incivility, and violence, and, I was ready to say, barbarity, with which religious controversy has too generally been carried on, and to promote a spirit of benevolence, kindness, and forbearance, among those who differ from each other. Let it not be supposed, however, that I wish to promote that timid, time-serving policy, which would either conceal the truth, or treat it as though it were of little consequence. The Lord deliver every friend of orthodoxy from this. But I would still remember the rebuke which our blessed Saviour administered to those, who, in a moment of resentment and impatience, wished for divine judgments upon some who did not favor their cause. And I would ever impress upon my memory and heart, the admonition of the Apostle, that "the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men," even opposers. And if in anything which I have written in this controversy, I have violated this excellent precept, the Lord forgive such an offence against the spirit of love.

REMARKS

ON

DR. WARE'S ANSWER.

The First Edition of my REPLY to Dr. Ware's Letters was published September, 1821. In May, 1822, Dr. Ware published an ANSWER. The principal points in this ANSWER were noticed in my REMARKS. Many of the REMARKS are here omitted, as they relate to subjects which have been more particularly considered in the previous parts of this publication.

REMARKS.

The system of divine truth, emanating from the mind of God, and agreeing with his immutable perfections, must be consistent with itself. But in every erroneous system, there are *inconsistencies*. Some of these arise from the union in the same system of different and opposite forms of error; but a greater number arise from the mixture of certain portions of truth with error. In order that any system of error may have a plausible appearance and an extensive circulation, it is found indispensable that it should contain a portion of truth, sufficient at least to afford some satisfaction to reason and some relief to conscience. But however skilfully truth may be mixed with error, and whatever plausibility may be given to a system of error by the truths which lie on its surface; it will always be found that such a mixture occasions inconsistencies which no art can long conceal.

I consider the general scheme of doctrine held by Unitarians, as radically erroneous. And yet, as it is exhibited by my antagonist, and by other Unitarians, it asserts many and very important truths. This circumstance, though in one point of view it becomes a recommendation of Unitarianism, really occasions an abundance of those inconsistencies with which the scheme is encumbered. The inconsistencies so apparent in Dr. Ware's reasoning are, in my opinion, to be charged to the scheme itself. No man, I think, can undertake its defence, without finding himself entangled in an endless train of self-contradictions.

Dr. Ware signifies that "the apparent inconsistencies and absurdities" which have been "fastened" upon him, do not

affect "the truth of the points at issue;" that they show, "not the weakness of the cause, but that its strength has not been fully displayed;" and that they are, "in general, if not in every instance, apparent only." He lets us know, in several places, that he thinks more highly of Unitarianism, than of his own skill in defending it, and rather chooses that any reproach should fall upon him as a disputant, than upon his cause. But on all these points, my views and feelings are different from his. And in particular, it is my serious conviction, that the inconsistencies and absurdities which are pointed out in my Reply, are real; that they affect the truth of the point at issue; and that Dr. Ware's Answer, instead of removing them, adds to their number.

I now proceed, though with all due respect for the good sense and good temper of my opponent, to offer the following remarks upon some of the exceptionable things in his publications, particularly the last.

USE OF THE WORD HOLINESS.

Divines and Christians generally use the word *holiness* to denote *moral excellence*, or conformity to the law of God. But in his Answer, Dr. Ware informs us that he did not mean to use it in this sense. Let us inquire how he does use it. In his Letters he says: "If children are depraved, *destitute of holiness*, averse to all good, etc., how could our Saviour declare respecting them, *of such is the kingdom of God?*" This, which Dr. Ware now looks upon as an "unlucky" passage, I considered as clearly signifying that children are not *destitute of holiness*, and so as contradicting what he says his scheme everywhere implies, namely, *that men by nature do not possess personal holiness.* In answer to this, he very frankly says, if we will insist that he must have used the word *holiness* in its technical sense, the charge of inconsistency will lie against him. I would be far from taking any advantage of an "unlucky phrase," which he used inadvertently, and now reviews with regret. I am willing to admit any explanations, and

to understand the word *holiness*, as he would have me understand it. As he used the word in his Letters, p. 30, it must have denoted that holiness which is a qualification for heaven. His argument required this. He now allows that he "used a phrase which expresses a meaning, that he did not intend to express." He tells us finally, that "the sense whether proper or improper, in which the word was evidently used, implies no contradiction." But I still have a difficulty in getting at a consistent sense. For if by holiness he does not mean holiness, but something else; he does indeed avoid one contradiction, — the one upon which he had his eye; but in avoiding this, he runs into others. For immediately after, he labors to establish a position directly contrary to what he says his main position was in regard to the subject. In my Reply I considered the passage, Matt. 19: 24, as *not* implying that little children possess any moral excellence or goodness like that of Christians. He here opposes this opinion. He adduces several arguments against it; and, in the whole course of his remarks, endeavors to show, that the amiable qualities of children, so often mentioned, are *moral* qualities, and that the *innocence*, *purity*, *veracity*, *etc.*, which appear in them, are of the same nature with those attributes of Christians which are denoted by the same names, and of course, that they have real *moral excellence* or *goodness*. Or more briefly thus. In p. 13, he says, he never meant to assert that children have any holiness, "in the technical sense." But in page 14, he expressly tells us they have "good qualities." Now if by "good qualities," he means *holiness in the technical sense*, that is, the moral excellence which prepares men for heaven, there is a plain contradiction. If he does not mean this, he means nothing which is pertinent to the argument. But after all, it is evident he does mean holiness in the technical sense. For his whole reasoning, pp. 14, 36, requires this. And besides, he gives his opinion, p. 11, that those same good qualities of children make "a part, and an important part, of that character, which constitutes *conformity to the moral law*, and renders him to whom it belongs *holy*." This is surely saying, that children have that which is of the nature of

holiness. And again, in the same page, he comes near charging me with confounding "physical and moral qualities," and agreeing with Hume and Godwin, because I contended that the natural qualities of children have nothing in them of a moral nature, and nothing like the moral excellence of Christians. Here again we see that, according to the plain import of Dr. Ware's expressions, little children naturally possess real holiness. If this is not his opinion, he has, I think, in his last publication as well as the former, occasionally used an "unlucky phrase." And, if I mistake not, he always will use unlucky phrases, and run into palpable inconsistencies, so long as he labors to defend a scheme of religion, which measures moral character and actions by any rule, except the perfect law of God. The fault is evidently in his system; and while he adheres to that, he must find difficulties unavoidable.

One more remark. It seems to me that the whole controversy, as Dr. Ware conducts it, turns very much on this single word, and that what gives his reasoning, at first view, such an appearance of plausibility, is the facility with which this word, *holiness*, continually shifts its meaning. If human nature is to be described in opposition to the orthodox doctrine of depravity, a variety of amiable and excellent qualities are attributed to it, and the whole train of thought and drift of reasoning imply, that children have that moral purity, or holiness, which makes them like real Christians, and fits them for the kingdom of heaven. But if this representation is to be reconciled with other acknowledged principles, particularly with the necessity of regeneration asserted by our Saviour; then the whole subject puts itself into a new attitude; the amiable qualities of children are not of a moral nature; they do not constitute personal holiness; and those who possess them must be born again before they can be qualified for the kingdom of heaven.

DR. WARE'S MAIN POINT ON THE SUBJECT OF DEPRAVITY.

Dr. Ware often asserts in his Answer, that the question at issue between us is not whether man is by nature the subject of some degree of depravity, but whether he is *totally depraved.* To this statement of the subject I have no objection; and I am willing to understand him as directing his argument from the natural characteristics of children, against the doctrine of *total depravity.* But what is the doctrine of total depravity? It is, *that man is by nature wholly destitute of holiness, and that all his moral affections and actions are sinful.* The doctrine allows that man has by nature many appetites, passions, and affections, which are not *sinful*, being not of a moral nature. I said expressly in my Reply, that the amiable qualities of children, which Dr. Ware makes so much of, are no part of depravity. But I must say too, they are *not holiness.* And if this can be made to appear, the controversy is ended. For our doctrine of total sinfulness does not imply, that sinfulness is mixed with no other dispositions or affections whatever. It only implies that it is mixed with none which are *holy.*

The whole force of Dr. Ware's argument against total depravity lies in "the amiable traits and virtuous tendencies" of children. The only question is, whether these amiable traits are *holy.* If they are, they disprove our doctrine. If they are not holy, they do not disprove it. Now I could quote a multitude of passages from Dr. Ware's two publications, which assert or imply that those things which he mentions as belonging to children are not *holy.* And I could prove the same thing from the word of God. If then any one supposes that Dr. Ware's argument above mentioned is valid, it must be because he misapprehends the orthodox doctrine. Dr. Ware thinks it a singular concession for an orthodox man to make, "that beings destitute of all good and inclined only to evil," are yet by nature possessed of those amiable qualities which are called innocence, kindness, gratitude, etc. But it

will cease to appear singular, if he will only take into view, first, that our doctrine respects man's *moral* affections, or his moral and religious character merely; and secondly, that the amiable qualities of childhood, by whatever name they may be called, constitute no part of moral and religious character, and of course do not oppose our doctrine.

The suggestion of Dr. Ware, at the close of Letter II, is of a practical nature, and ought not to pass unnoticed. He says, "If parents find it impossible to persuade their children to love, fear, and obey God, etc., they are certainly called upon to examine most seriously, whether the cause of it is not to be found in the representations which have been given them of the character and government of God."

They certainly ought to inquire. But if it should be found that the more *truly* and *faithfully* the character and government of God are represented, the more distant is the human heart from love and obedience; it would be nothing different from what occurred under the personal ministry of Christ.

DR. WARE'S ATTEMPT TO SHOW THAT DEPRAVITY IS NOT INNATE.

I endeavored to make it appear in my Reply, Chapter III, that all the circumstances which lead us to consider any property of man as *natural* or *innate*, manifestly attend moral depravity. I shall remark, in few words, on the manner in which Dr. Ware attempts to prove my reasoning inconclusive.

The first circumstance of human depravity which I mentioned, as proving it to be natural, was its *universality*. Dr. Ware thinks it is not true that all have sinned in such a sense "*as implies a character*." "No reason," he says, "can be assigned, why a single sin should constitute a sinner, any more than a single act of virtue should give the character of a virtuous man."

On this I offer the following remarks. The divine law treats all its subjects according to what their characters really are. If that law pronounces any human being to be a *sinner*, and aims its

threats against him *as a sinner;* we are surely to consider him as having in reality the *character* of a sinner. Now what does the law say? "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Is it said, that a single sin does not constitute a *sinner* in the sense of the divine law? But the Apostle says, "he who offends in one point, is guilty of all;" which must imply, at least, that he who commits a single sin, shows that he has the *character of a sinner*, and must be treated by the law as a sinner. How is it in regard to the civil law, which prohibits murder? If a man deliberately commits an act of murder; does not that one act expose him to be treated as a *murderer?* And unless he give good evidence of a thorough reformation, does not that one act give him, and permanently too, the *character* of a murderer? Dr. Ware, in his remarks on this point, has his eye upon the same mixture of qualities, so often mentioned above. But it must be remembered, that it is a mixture, of which *holiness* has not been proved to constitute any part. This applies also to his remarks on the second circumstance mentioned in my Reply; namely, that *the indications of depravity appear early.* He says there are other things of an opposite character, which appear early too, referring still to the same amiable characteristics of childhood. But those characteristics, however amiable and useful, cannot be proved to be of a moral nature, or to constitute any degree of conformity to God's law. It is true, the extinction of them, arising as it must from an extraordinary degree of wickedness, will form an article in the catalogue of sins; and so would the extinction of any of the natural appetites or faculties, if it should result from the same cause. But because the extinction of any natural appetite, or faculty of man, by means of moral corruption, is to be accounted as a sin; it does not surely follow that the *existence* of that appetite or faculty is to be accounted holiness.

Another circumstance which I mentioned, as distinguishing those things which are *innate*, was, that "they cannot be traced to any change in the constitution of man's nature subsequent to his birth." Dr. Ware says, "the whole reasoning of Dr. Woods on the subject proceeds on the supposition, either that I had

asserted, or that the doctrine which I advanced did imply, such a change. You will therefore be not a little surprised to find that no such change in the constitution of our nature is either asserted or implied in all that I have said." Now let us see what is asserted or implied in Dr. Ware's Letters. In p. 27, speaking of some of the amiable dispositions of little children, he says, "what I have stated, I am persuaded is the general character, *until the disposition and tendency of nature has been changed* by education, example, and circumstances." It is here implied that the corruption of character, which after a while appears in children, is to be accounted for by a *change* which education, example, and circumstances produce *in the disposition and tendency of their nature.* And yet he thinks that no such change is either *asserted or implied* in all that he has said! In his explanation, Answer, p. 32, he signifies that when he speaks of a change in the disposition and tendency of nature, he must be understood to mean something quite different from a change in the moral constitution of man, or a change in his nature. But he does not tell us nor attempt to tell us what he does mean, nor what distinction can be made between "a change in the *constitution of man's nature*," and "a change in *the disposition and tendency of nature.*" But without any reference to what Dr. Ware had said respecting a change of nature or moral constitution, it was quite to my purpose to prove depravity to be native, by the consideration, that it is not owing to any change of nature subsequent to birth. For clearly, if mankind are depraved, as Dr. Ware allows, and if depravity is not owing to any change of moral constitution or character subsequent to their birth, their depravity must be *native.*

The fourth circumstance I mentioned to show that depravity is native, was, that it is *spontaneous.* Dr. Ware, p. 33, adverts immediately to the same amiable affections of children, and asks, whether they are not *spontaneous also.* I have said already that they are. But they are not moral qualities, and cannot be alleged as proofs of anything contrary to our doctrine of native depravity.

The next reason which I gave for thinking moral evil *natural,*

was, "that it is hard to be eradicated." Dr. Ware's reply is, "that the same may be said with equal truth of the good affections and principles of our nature." I acknowledge it, and have before acknowledged it to be so, with respect to what he calls the good affections and principles of our nature. Those amiable qualities have all the marks of being natural. In this we are agreed.

My sixth reason was *the certainty that every child born into the world will be a sinner.* Dr. Ware replies thus: "If the word *sinner* is here used as a designation of character, and it be intended to assert that the prevailing disposition, affections, etc., will universally be sinful, it is not true." On this subject I am well aware that we are too far apart to have any prospect of coming to the same conclusion. For my opponent denies not only that all men, but that any men, however bad, have a prevalence of sinful dispositions. If he is right, there is a preponderance of moral good in all. And if I should admit this, I should adopt the same conclusion as he does respecting man's natural character. He thinks a paragraph which I wrote on this subject implies, that the orthodox wish to prove merely, "that sin is natural to man in the same sense that *holiness* is." "If this is the case," he says, "there is no need of controversy." But this is not the case. I maintain that sin is natural to man in the same sense and only in the same sense with those appetites and affections which he *calls* holiness.

CONSISTENCY OF DEPRAVITY WITH THE MORAL CHARACTER OF GOD.

On this subject I have but few additional remarks to make. In my Reply, I mentioned it as a particular fault in the mode of reasoning adopted by Unitarians, "that they consider a difficulty which they are not able to solve, as sufficient to disprove a doctrine, supported by clear and conclusive evidence." Dr. Ware seems to wish me "to refer to the book and page where

such an assertion is to be found." I acknowledge I can refer to no book where Unitarians avow this principle in so many words. But I could refer to many a book, and particularly to the one to which I have offered a reply, and to the part of it which relates to this very subject, as exhibiting the very mode of reasoning here complained of. The evidence which supports the doctrine of natural depravity is, in my view, clear and conclusive; and I think it would be so in Dr. Ware's view, were it not for certain difficulties, which he is not able to solve. Those difficulties are considered by him as sufficient to disprove the doctrine. Be sure, he will not say that the evidence in support of the doctrine is clear and conclusive. And why? Not because there is really any defect in *the evidence*, but because he suffers the difficulties so to influence his mind, as entirely to prevent him from feeling the weight of evidence. This is what often occurs. Men acquire a habit of looking more at the various difficulties which attend religious truth, than at the evidence which supports it. In consequence of this habit, that evidence which in other circumstances would appear perfectly conclusive, loses all its clearness and force. Thus it is in fact the consideration of *difficulties* which leads them to reject the truth. This is a fault which Dr. Ware has doubtless had occasion to notice, and which must be hazardous to the cause of truth. For there is really no doctrine in Christianity or in natural theology, which is not attended with difficulties. And we learn from the case of Hume, and we may perhaps confirm the lesson by some portions of our own experience, that there may be such a habit of dwelling upon difficulties and in relation to any subject whatever, as will be likely to end in a skeptical state of mind, if not in a decided rejection of the truth.

I am charged with evading the point at issue, and confounding the *beginning* of sin with its *origin;* things which Dr. Ware considers as very different. He says, "the question is not *at what time*, whether earlier or later, the commencement of sin may be consistent with the moral perfections of God; but whether its originating in a nature wholly corrupt, — *in connection with the*

other doctrines of Calvinism — be consistent?" Dr. Ware has indeed a right to introduce a question in this complex form. But it is not the form in which I have ever attempted to discuss it. The method which I have adopted is, to take up convenient parts of a complex subject, and discuss them first separately, then in their relations to each other. In the present case, I inquire first whether the orthodox doctrine of depravity is consistent with the divine attributes. After that I proceed to inquire, whether the doctrine of Election is consistent; then the doctrine of divine influence, and the doctrine of endless punishment. If I find nothing in the several parts which constitute the system, and nothing in their relation to each other, inconsistent with the divine perfections, I conclude there is nothing inconsistent in the whole system. And I maintain that we cannot properly discuss any complex subject, without thus analyzing it, and considering its constituent parts by themselves.

The present question is, whether sin's "originating in a nature wholly corrupt, etc.," is consistent with the divine attributes. But what is a corrupt nature? What are wrong affections? What is an inclination to evil? Are these anything but sin — sin in its essence or fountain? Dr. Ware speaks of the *source* or *origin* of sin as something distinct from *sin itself*. If he means the outward act of sin, the distinction he makes is very proper. Outward, visible sin springs from inward sin; sin in the life from sin in the heart. But sin in the highest sense is *sin in the heart;* that is, *wrong affection*, *corrupt inclination*. There cannot then be any doubt that sin in outward act — sin in the life — originates in wrong affection, or a nature morally corrupt. It can originate nowhere else. It is impossible to form a conception of such a thing as sin, which does not begin in the heart. So that no man can make a distinction that is intelligible, between that which in the most proper sense is *sin*, and *corrupt affection*, or *inclination*. The question whether depravity is *innate*, is the same as the question, whether it is coeval with man's moral existence, or whether it belongs to his moral nature from the first. And this is the same as the question, *at what time it commences*.

Now if Dr. Ware has supposed that the orthodox doctrine of depravity is anything different from this position, namely, that moral evil in man commences at the very time when moral existence commences; I will only say, that this is what I have intended by it, and that it is in this light only I have undertaken to defend it. Let then the controversy, so far as I am concerned, be thus understood. There is frequently some confusion or difficulty attending the discussion of this part of the subject, from considering the phrases *corruption of nature*, *wrong affection or inclination*, *tendency to evil*, *etc.*, as meaning something which is essentially different from sin. If such phrases are used in any intelligible sense, they must mean the real existence of *moral evil*, sin in the heart, forbidden by the divine law, and altogether blame-worthy. It is surely sin for men to have a corrupt heart, or an inclination to transgress the divine law. And if this is sin at one period of human existence, why not at another?

DR. WARE'S REMARKS AS TO THE COMMON USE OF THE TERMS SIN AND HOLINESS, SINNERS AND SAINTS, REGENERATE AND UNREGENERATE.

In his Reply, p. 44, Dr. Ware says; "your impression, taken from the common use of these terms, is, that sin and holiness are not only opposites, but opposites in such a sense, that they can never exist together in the same person." And he says, it is "in conformity with this distinction, that all mankind are divided into two classes, — saints and sinners; the former wholly righteous, the latter totally corrupt." This use of terms is expressly attributed to the orthodox. But there is not an orthodox man in the world that either believes this, or ever said anything that implies it. The distinction which the orthodox have uniformly made between saints and sinners, is, that the former have *some holiness*, mixed with *remaining sin;* while the latter are *destitute of holiness*, and so far as moral affection is concerned, entirely sinful. Thus we make a real and obvious distinction, and one

which seems to us to be very clearly made in the word of God. But Unitarians affirm that sinners, as well as saints, have a degree of holiness mixed with sin, and so leave no room for any radical distinction between them. If Dr. Ware should say that saints are distinguished from sinners, in that they have a preponderance of holiness over sin; he will find that he has precluded this distinction by saying that sinners have the same preponderance.

STATE OF ADAM'S POSTERITY IN CONSEQUENCE OF HIS TRANSGRESSION.

Dr. Ware says, p. 52, that the descendants of the first transgressor "commence their existence under circumstances of increased liability to sin, and greater difficulty in preserving their innocency. — Occasions of sin are multiplied, and inducements to it increased and strengthened." And he adds, "that any individual of his posterity will be far more likely, than he was, to lose his innocence," and that "there may be what we term a moral certainty" of this. I introduce this passage to show that Dr. Ware's scheme is encumbered with as many and as great difficulties as ours, whether we consider it in relation to God's attributes, or to moral agency. Dr. Ware thinks it inconsistent with the infinite goodness of the Creator to bring human beings into existence in such a state, that they will from the first have an inclination or tendency to sin. He thinks this inconsistent with moral agency also. But does he see no difficulty in believing that the Creator brings his creatures into existence in a state, in which they are under such a strong liability to sin, — in which occasions of sin are so multiplied and inducements so increased, that there is a moral certainty they will all lose their innocence? Should we not naturally expect that a being of infinite goodness would place his creatures in a different state? — or, if he placed them in such a state, that he would afford some effectual security against its dangers? And are not those external inducements to sin, which have such strength that it is morally *certain* they will

actually draw men universally into sin, as hard to be reconciled with moral agency, as what the orthodox suppose?

MISREPRESENTATION OF THE ORTHODOX DOCTRINE RESPECTING TOTAL DEPRAVITY.

Dr. Ware says; "If we are by nature totally depraved, inclined wholly to evil, every affection and action wrong; what room is there for becoming more and more sinful?" This is the same as to say, the orthodox doctrine implies not only that all the affections and actions of the unregenerate are sinful without any mixture of *holiness*, but that they are sinful in *the highest possible degree*. Whereas it is the uniform opinion of the orthodox, that all the affections, whether sinful or holy, are capable of continual increase. With what reason then can Dr. Ware affirm, that if we are wholly sinful at first, any change to which we are subject must be to a *less* sinful state, since there would be an impossibility of changing to one *more* sinful?" just as though it were a self-evident truth, that affections which are entirely of a sinful character, are incapable of rising to a higher degree of strength.

COMMENCEMENT OF SIN IN ADAM AND HIS POSTERITY.

It seems to me strange, that Dr. Ware, and others who agree with him, should not perceive that their mode of reasoning on this subject is unphilosophical. When we *account* for anything philosophically, we *assign* its *causes*. The thing here to be accounted for is the *commencement of sin* in the posterity of Adam. Now in accounting for this, we must assign causes, which, in the order of nature at least, precede the existence of the effect that is to be accounted for. And we must certainly guard against assigning as a *cause* of the *first sin* in man, that which is itself *sin*. If we do this, besides running into absurdity, we shall still have the question, how we are to account for *this very sin*, which by mis-

take we assigned as *the cause* of the *first sin.* Dr. Ware accounts for the fact, that moral agents first commit sin, by their yielding to temptation, abusing their faculties, etc. But is not yielding to temptation a sin? And does this account for the first sin? If so, there is a sin *before the first sin.* But passing over this, we will now consider this yielding to temptation or this abuse of faculties, as the first sin. How is *this* to be accounted for? what are the causes of this first actual sin in the posterity of Adam? Dr. Ware mentions the natural appetites and passions, and the various objects which are suited to gratify them, and which become *temptations to sin.* But these temptations do not operate upon a man by any physical or mechanical force. In order that he may perform any act of a moral nature, he must come under the influence of a moral motive. Now suppose the temptations addressed to his appetites and passions prevail, and, in opposition to the command of God, he yields to them. The thing now to be accounted for is the fact, that he does yield to temptation and sin against God. What is the *cause* of this? Is it the outward temptation? But if this is, *by itself*, the cause of men's sinning against God, then wherever this cause exists, sin will take place. But temptation, by itself, is not the cause of men's sinning. It certainly was not so in relation to our Saviour. Nor is it so in any moral agents, who through the time of temptation maintain the temper of holiness. Temptation then, by itself, does not prevail to lead men into sin. Separately from their disposition, it is not the cause of sin. I speak here of actual sin. If then temptation is in any sense a cause of men's sinning against God, it must be only as a part of a *complex* cause, the moral state of the mind on which temptation operates, being essentially connected with it. This state of the mind is of *principal consequence;* because the effect of temptation, as an outward cause, depends upon it. If this state is wrong, an act of sinful compliance takes place; if right, an act of holy resistance. In regard, then, to the outward act of sinning against God in complying with temptation, we have arrived at a satisfactory cause, though of a complex nature; namely, the existence of temptation, combined with that state of

mind which gives temptation a prevailing force, and so leads to particular acts of transgression. Thus far all is plain and certain, being perfectly agreeable to those well known principles of our nature which are learnt from uniform facts. We have come then to the first outward act of transgression, and find the cause of this to be an outward object soliciting a moral agent to transgress, and a state of mind corresponding with that outward object, and so leading to the actual transgression. But what are we to say of this disposition to transgress, which gives temptation all its efficacy? Here we find that which is sin in the ultimate sense, and that without which nothing else could be sin. Without a wrong affection or disposition of the mind, it is clear that no bodily action could be considered as sinful. And a careful attention to the subject will, I think, lead to the conclusion, that no volition can be sinful, unless it is connected with a sinful disposition or affection, and is prompted by it. If then we would go into a thorough investigation of the subject before us, and would account philosophically for the *very commencement* of moral evil in the minds of human beings; we must account for that wrong affection or wrong state of the heart, in which all the evil of bodily actions and of simple volitions is ultimately found.

If a man supremely loves God and prefers the divine will to his own gratification, it is impossible we should view any action he performs in such a state of mind, as sinful. We see then that temptation, bad example, and other outward circumstances, are, by themselves, wholly insufficient to account for an overt act of sin; since such an act would never result from these circumstances, were it not for that wrong state of moral feeling, which gives those circumstances a hurtful influence. We come then, with double demonstration, to this result, that *sin* lies radically and essentially in a wrong state of the heart; and of course, if there is any such thing as the commencement of sin in a moral agent, it must in reality be found, not in any outward act, nor in any volition simply considered, but in that wrong moral disposition or affection which gives rise to particular volitions, and to correspondent external actions. To account satisfactorily for the beginning

of moral evil in man is to account for the beginning of wrong affection. Now does Dr. Ware say anything to account for *this?* Does he point out its appropriate causes? The things which he mentions are its consequences, not its causes. The Bible teaches us, that the sinfulness of mankind stands in connection with Adam's offence, and is the consequence of it. But excepting this connection, which Scripture makes so important, I consider the existence of a wrong disposition or state of mind from the commencement of moral agency, as *an ultimate fact;* just as the existence of holy affection would be, if Adam had not sinned, and men were from the first holy.

But Dr. Ware thinks that our considering the commencement of sin in the human character as an ultimate fact, resulting from the disobedience of Adam, and so depending on the divine constitution, and not on any previous voluntary act of man, is inconsistent with God's moral attributes, and with man's moral agency. But I ask, in what respects it is inconsistent? Is the commencement of moral evil inconsistent with God's attributes, because it is dependent on his constitution or agency? But in this respect, as I have already endeavored to show, Dr. Ware's scheme is liable to as much objection as ours. For, suppose the beginning of sin in man is brought about by the influence of his natural appetites and passions, which are in themselves innocent, but prove temptations to sin, and actually prevail to induce him to commit sin. I ask, whether those natural appetites become temptations, and whether those temptations prevail to induce man to sin, according to the laws or principles of his nature? If the answer is affirmative; then I ask, were not those laws or principles constituted by the Creator? and accordingly, does not the occurrence of sin result from his constitution? But if you say, there is no regular law or principle of human nature, according to which temptations produce such an effect; then tell me, what gives temptations their prevailing force? Have they any adaptedness to produce such an effect? If you say that they have; then in what does that adaptedness consist? and who gave it to them? If you deny such an adaptedness; then how happens it that they produce an effect which they are nowise adapted to produce? Is it through

the operation of some extraordinary cause, intervening, and thrusting in an event contrary to the established order of nature? Or is it by *chance;* that is, through the operation of no cause whatever? To say this would be a singular way of *accounting* for an event. But Dr. Ware, in accordance with Dr. John Taylor and others, thinks the commencement of sin in man may be satisfactorily accounted for by the influence of the will in the use of its self-determining power. Now suppose the will has a self-determining power by which it produces such a great event. Did not God make the will, and give it such a power? And when he made it, did he not know how it would operate? And did he not so constitute the will, and all the causes which were to act upon it, that it should of course operate just as it does? Do you say, free will does not act under the influence of any motives, causes, or regular laws whatever? Then I say, it must be a very inconvenient, unmanageable, and hazardous thing to reside and rule in the mind. Who would wish to be under such a capricious master? Who would not be afraid of being dashed upon rocks and quicksands with such a pilot? And yet, according to Dr. Ware, God has constituted us in just such a manner as this; has put us under the guidance of a will thus high in power, and thus capricious and dangerous in the use of power. But supposing it to be true that God has given his creatures such a will, and formed it to act in such a manner; certainly its various movements and effects must be ascribed ultimately to his design. Thus on a fair consideration of the subject, it appears that Dr. Ware's scheme makes the commencement of sin in the human character as really dependent on the divine constitution and agency as our scheme does.

Our system in respect to the commencement of sin is thought to be inconsistent with moral agency. But if moral agency ever commences in man, he must have a moral affection, which could not have been produced by any antecedent exercise of his moral agency, being involved in the very *first* exercise. The conclusion must be, that such an affection is so far from being inconsistent with moral agency, that it is essential to it. Moral agency could no more begin without moral affection, than it could continue without it.

When I assert that the early commencement of moral evil in any human being is an *ultimate fact;* the assertion regards him merely in his individual character. Accordingly my meaning is, that there is no personal property or act in him, which can be considered as the cause of his first depravity. His commencing his existence with a sinful nature, or the commencement of sin in him, cannot be accounted for in this way. In this respect, nothing can be named as its *cause;* and so it is an ultimate fact. But in another respect, this fact is truly the effect of a preceding cause. Every child of Adam has a relation, a *real* relation *to him*, as the head of the human species. On the ground of this relation, the Bible accounts for the first sinfulness of human beings. It plainly teaches us, that all men are sinners in consequence of the offence of one, that is Adam. It teaches that God constituted a connection between the conduct of Adam, and the character of his posterity. According to this divine constitution, which doubtless had great and holy ends in view, the sin of Adam is to be regarded as the *cause*, the *distant* cause of the commencement of moral evil in his posterity. I presume Dr. Ware refers to my views on this subject, when he represents it as inconsistent that I should say the commencement of depravity is an *ultimate fact*, and yet as respects the posterity of Adam should say it is a fact which is to be accounted for. Answer, p. 61. In the restricted sense, above explained, I consider it as an ultimate fact. In the larger or more distant sense, the Apostle accounts for it, or assigns its cause.

There is, in my view, a manifest difference, in some respects, between the commencement of sin in Adam, and in his posterity. Adam began his existence in a state of moral purity. He was disposed from the first to love and obey his Creator. In this he differed from his posterity. Adam, by the exercise of holiness for a time, had done something towards forming a habit of holiness, which, together with his experience of the pleasures of holiness, must, we should think, have fortified him in a good degree against all temptation to sin. On this account, it would seem more remarkable that he should sin, than that others should sin at the

commencement of their moral agency. In Adam there was a change from previous holiness to sin; while there is no such change in his posterity. Such is the nature of the distinction which I have contemplated between the two events. But in other respects they are alike. In the first place, they are both equally dependent on God, and equally according to that wise purpose, by which he settled the great scheme of the universe. Secondly; the two events are *equally consistent with the laws of moral agency.* The sin of Adam took place in such a way as not to infringe any principle of moral agency. He was as perfectly a moral agent when he first sinned, and when he began to have sinful affection, as in any previous or subsequent period of his life. If, as a moral agent, he was so constituted as to be capable of different kinds of moral action and moral affection; then his being actually the subject of good and bad affections and actions, and his changing from one to the other, was within the compass of his moral agency. Whether he exhibits himself in the exercise of good affection, or of bad affection, or in the very point of transition from one to the other, he exhibits himself as a complete moral agent. And if we would give the history of his moral conduct, or of what he did as a moral agent, it becomes perfectly natural and proper to relate, as Moses does, the story of his fall; and the account is to be understood in the same obvious sense as the account of any other sin ever committed by a moral agent. Whatever may be said of the agency of God, or of the usual manner in which motives produce their effects in the mind; it must be admitted as an unquestionable truth, that Adam was perfectly a moral agent in the commencement and progress of his defection from God. In this view, the account which the Scripture gives of the temptation and apostasy of Adam, is as proper and satisfactory, as the account it gives of human conduct in any other instance. And this implies that, although in the previous history of Adam's life no external motives had excited any sinful desire or volition, or led him to any sinful action, motives might lead to this effect, in perfect consistency with his moral agency. No reasonable man can have any doubt as to the fact, that Adam, in the act

of sinning, was completely a moral agent. The Bible speaks of him as such; his own conscience condemned him as such; and God treated him as such. Indeed his moral agency in that affair stood out to view so prominently, that men in general have felt much less difficulty respecting it, than respecting the moral agency of his posterity, in the first stage of their existence. But as to this last subject, Dr. Ware asserts that men come into existence reasonable and accountable beings, that is, moral agents.

Such are my views on this subject. Some may wish me to go further. But how is this possible? When I come to ultimate facts, I must stop. Any attempt to account for these, or to assign their philosophical causes, is folly. Ultimate facts, instead of being accounted for philosophically, must be referred to the divine constitution. They exist, because the Author of the universe so determined. This is the best resting place I can find, both for my understanding and my heart.

I will only add here, that the same general views as those which I have expressed on the philosophy of the mind, on the nature of moral agency, and the absolute dependence of all things in the physical and moral world on the will of God, are maintained with great zeal, by the ablest and most consistent writers on the side of Unitarians. As to the universal agency of God, and the consistency between the divine purpose and the most perfect free agency, and as to the certain connection between moral causes and effects, Priestley, and Belsham, and other philosophical Unitarians agree with us; although they differ from us widely as to the bearing of these principles upon other subjects. I have mentioned this agreement in regard to philosophical principles to show, that our maintaining them ought never to be made an occasion of a popular odium against us in distinction from Unitarians.

FREE-WILL AND SELF-DETERMINING POWER.

Dr. Ware attaches much importance to the *freedom* which he ascribes to the will, or to man as a moral agent. Man is "not only voluntary, but *free*." I am quite desirous of knowing ex-

actly what sense he means to convey by this word. *Freedom* is a relative term, and must be understood according to the nature of the subject to which it relates. If we say, that one who was a prisoner or a slave, is *free*, we mean, that he is free from *confinement* or *slavery*. When the Bible speaks of sinners being made *free*, it speaks of their deliverance from the dominion of *sin*. But what is to be understood by the word, when applied to man as a moral agent? Is man free *absolutely, and in all respects?* Then he is free from the influence of *reason*, and *conscience*, and *common sense*. He is free too from *obligation;* for obligation we know is something which *binds*. And if man is free absolutely, and in all respects, he is free from appetites and passions, and free too from the self-determining power of the *will*. But who would give the word such a signification as this? As Dr. Ware uses it in relation to a moral agent, he doubtless means to use it with such restrictions as the case requires. His meaning must be, not that man is free from the influence of reason, or of the natural appetites, or of the will; but that he is free from whatsoever is inconsistent with moral agency. But how are we to learn what is inconsistent with moral agency? Not by conjecture; not by reasoning a priori; but by observation of what is fact in ourselves and others. To determine what is inconsistent with moral agency will be the same as to determine from what a man must be *free* in order to be a moral agent. Must a man then, in order to be a moral agent, be free from the influence of *reason?* We answer, no. Moral agents must have reason, and in all their actions, reason must have an influence upon them in one way or another. The influence then, of *reason*, or, which is the same thing, the influence of *rational considerations*, is consistent with moral agency. I might rather say, it is *essential* to moral agency. Now suppose that reason, (I here mean *right* reason,) has such an influence over a man, that he is at all times and in all circumstances governed by it, in other words, is always actuated by those considerations which sound reason suggests; is this in any degree inconsistent with moral agency? Certainly not. We consider a moral agent to be virtuous and praise-worthy, just in proportion to

the degree in which right reason influences his mind and his actions. And we look upon him as deserving our esteem and confidence just in proportion as we believe it certain that he will continue to be governed by right reason. If a man, like the celebrated Hale, has the habit of weighing the various considerations which belong to every subject with great care, and if by suitable discipline he has brought his mind to be so nicely balanced, that in all important questions of moral duty, he weighs things very exactly, and is determined one way or the other by the superior force of rational consideration or evidence, as surely as the most accurate balances are moved by the superior weight; we all unite in giving him the honor of an accurate judgment and an upright heart; and instead of considering him as robbed of any portion of moral agency, we congratulate him as one whose character, as an intellectual and moral agent, is elevated to an unusual degree of perfection. The conclusion from all this is, that the freedom of a moral agent does not require that he should be free from the uniform and certain influence of reason. In other words, rational considerations may uniformly exert an effectual and certain influence over his mind, in perfect consistency with his moral agency. An objector may say, I allow all this, if the influence is not *necessary*, or if the man is not thus influenced by *necessity*. Now to make the thing easy, let me say that, according to our views, there can be no such necessity in the case, as implies force, or coercion, or anything contrary to perfect voluntariness. Indeed there can be no necessity in this case, except the connection which rational considerations have with a correspondent act of the mind. Now the greater the necessity of this kind, that is, the more certain and invariable the connection between rational considerations and a correspondent act of the mind, the higher is the moral worth of the agent. To be under such influence, is moral freedom. To be free from such influence, is moral degradation and thraldom.

But I must proceed further. Does the freedom attributed to a moral agent imply that he is free from the influence of *inclination* or *affection?* The answer is as easy as before. Affection is an

essential attribute of a moral agent. No action can have a moral character, unless performed under its influence. And as this influence is essential to a moral agent, it may be raised to the highest degree of efficacy, without the least infringement of moral agency. Suppose a man acts entirely under the control of love to God. This affection is supreme and constant. It occupies all his faculties, governs his will, and directs his conduct. In consequence of the strength and uniformity of character which he has attained, we may regard it as a certainty, that he will, in every choice he makes, be under the influence of love to God. Is he not a moral agent? Does this commanding, overpowering influence of holy love interfere with his *freedom?* Now take an opposite character. A man has such a confirmed habit of covetousness or malice, and the passion has acquired such strength, that it is a matter of certainty, that he will choose and act under its influence. His depraved, wicked passion entirely governs him. Is not he too a moral agent?

What then is the *freedom* which belongs to a moral agent? My answer is briefly this. It is freedom from that *physical coercion* or *force*, which either causes actions to take place that are not voluntary, or prevents those which the agent chooses to perform. So far as any man is under the influence of such physical force, we consider him as deprived of moral agency. The freedom of a moral agent implies a freedom from all essential disorder or derangement of the rational faculties. It implies a freedom from whatever would violate or suspend the general laws of human nature. For instance: It is a law of our nature, that a certain part of our bodily and mental actions should be under the control of the will. Now a moral agent must be free from whatever would take away that control. Again. The will chooses, or rather a moral agent chooses, under the influence of his *dispositions* or *affections*. This is as much a law of our nature as the other. The freedom essential to a moral agent implies, therefore, a freedom from whatever would prevent his will from being influenced by his affections. The suspension of this law of our nature, would make a man a *moral monster* — an absurdity. He loves

God with all his heart, but chooses to perform acts of hatred. He perfectly loves the law, but chooses to disobey it. He loves the happiness of his fellow-men, but chooses to injure them. He hates sin, but chooses to commit it. Or he loves sin, but chooses to avoid it. I say then, to be a moral agent, a man must be free from whatever would supersede the connection between his prevailing affection and his volitions. I have suggested already, that no volition which is not connected with an affection of the heart, and not prompted by it, can be of a moral nature.

The freedom of a moral agent is a freedom from what I have mentioned above, and from everything else of the same nature. But beyond this, I know not what freedom a man ever possessed, or can desire. If Dr. Ware means anything different from this, I must wait to be informed what it is.

But Dr. Ware thinks there must be "a power of choosing between different courses, and of yielding to either of two opposite motives;" "a power of modifying the influence of the several powers, on both sides, etc."

I am fully persuaded that this subject, though abstract in its nature, and often wrapt up in a very ambiguous phraseology, is yet as capable, as most other metaphysical subjects, of being presented in a clear and satisfactory light. But I shall not be able at present to give the subject so thorough an investigation as I could wish.

Doubtless Dr. Ware means to speak of a power which man really possesses; a power, which we know actually belongs to ourselves, by being conscious of exercising it. I grant that man has "a power of choosing between different courses, and of yielding to either of two opposite motives." But *in what way* has he this power? and by what means does he bring it into action? Has he the power of choosing entirely at *random*, without *any motive whatever?* Has he the power of yielding to one or the other of two opposite motives, *without some reason* for thus yielding? Is such a power desirable? Does any man really *possess* it? Is any one conscious of having ever exercised it?

We have often made a choice between two different courses;

and we have had a *reason* for such a choice. We have surely had *some* reason, otherwise our will must have broken its natural alliance with our rational faculties, and acted — I know not how, — perhaps merely to show its independence. If so, then *this* was the *reason* of its action. Every man has exercised the power of yielding to one or the other of two opposite motives. Worldly honor has been addressed to him as a motive to one course of action; the favor of God and the pleasures of religion, as a motive to another. He has exercised his power, and yielded, I will suppose, to the influence of the latter. But had he not a *reason* for this? And was not his voluntary act of yielding influenced by that reason? If any one is disposed to say, that he had *power* in those very circumstances, to yield to the other motive; my reply is, that we are now inquiring not for an imaginary power, but for a power which we know man possesses, by the fact that he has exercised it. Has any man ever yielded to either of two opposite motives, or chosen between two different courses of action, without a reason? I allow that many men choose without such a reason as will justify their choice. But what man ever made a choice without *some* reason? If any man soberly thinks he has a power to choose without being influenced by any reason or motive whatever, let him make the trial. And he will certainly find that his will is pertinaciously set upon having *some motive* to influence its determinations, and will feel it to be kind of insult, if one would induce it to act in any other way. The law of our nature for which I contend, is established by every instance of fair deliberation; as the object of such deliberation is, not to bring the mind to choose without being governed by motives, but to discover which are the motives that should govern it. If any man could get a habit of choosing without the influence of motives; it would be greatly to his disadvantage.

When I speak of *reason* or *motive* in this discussion, I refer not only to external objects, or considerations from without the mind, but to *the disposition* or *affection of the mind itself*. I refer to this chiefly; because the effect of everything external to the mind depends on this. The disposition, affection, or desire of the mind

is, according to the invariable law of our nature, *the grand motive.* Voluntary actions flow from it, as effects from a cause. There may indeed be a strife among the passions or affections. One may be a motive, even a powerful motive, and yet may be overcome by another more powerful. The question of self-determining power in relation to this point, is whether man has a power to choose, except under the influence of some affection or desire. But the question is more properly a question of fact; did a man ever make a choice which was not influenced by his affections, dispositions or desires? If no man ever did this, then the question of a *power* to do it is of no consequence. For what can be the value of a power, which is never exercised? And what evidence can there be of its existence?

It seems to me very clear, that no choice or determination of mind, not influenced by the affections, could ever be considered as being either good or bad, or as having any moral character. I consider it therefore as a law of our nature, fully ascertained by facts, that every voluntary action is prompted by the disposition or affection of the heart in view of some outward object, and that it is the influence of the disposition or affection upon voluntary action, that renders such action holy or sinful.

The considerations, which prove that *motives*, in the comprehensive sense in which I have used the word, are the proximate causes of volition and moral action, are so conclusive in my mind, and the position is so perfectly consonant to our best views of a rational being, that I have been not a little surprised that any man could embrace a different opinion. It is certainly the experience of every human being, that motives excite voluntary action. And whenever we would excite men to *choose* and *act*, our knowledge of the human mind leads instantly to present *motives* before them, as the only way in which they can be influenced. Why then should any one contend for a principle, which is so contrary to our experience, and which would in fact deprive man of the advantage or his rational nature?

If my opponents think my remarks out of place, because they contend as well as we, that *reason* is to be exercised in all the

actions of men; my reply is, that men exercise reason no further, than they govern their choice and their conduct by *motives*. If by the freedom of the will, or the self-determining power, for which they plead, they intend nothing but this, that a man has power to deliberate; that his will is influenced, not by compulsion, but by rational considerations; that being wholly free from constraint, he will always choose and act, as motives prompt; then there is no ground for dispute. When any of us speak of moral or philosophical *necessity*, a term which I have wished to avoid in this controversy, we mean nothing more than the constancy and certainty of the connection between motives and voluntary action.

But I must not quit this subject, without a more particular examination of Dr. Ware's scheme. "An agent," he says, "implies a principle of activity, a power of acting, not merely of being acted upon." I fully agree to this; only having it understood that the power of acting which belongs to a moral agent, is a power to act according to the laws of a rational and moral nature; in other words, to act under the influence of *motives*. In this way, and in this only, has a moral agent power to act. Our author says further; "an intelligent agent possesses the power of modifying the influences of the several powers on both sides, by which he is acted upon, in such a manner, that *with the same constitution as respects the strength of the appetites and passions, and the power of reason, and knowledge of right and wrong, and also in the same external circumstances of temptation, the course may not be the same.*" I know not that any objection lies against this. I admit, that two men may have "the same constitution as respects the strength of the appetites and passions, and the power of reason, and knowledge of right and wrong, and may also be in the same external circumstances of temptation;" and yet that they may pursue different courses of conduct; because, though alike in all these respects, they may be totally unlike as to *moral principle*, or *the reigning affection* of the heart. The constitution of men, as respects the strength of their natural appetites and passions, has no necessary connection with their moral affections. For though a man's natural appetites and passions are strong, and

are the occasion of many a dangerous temptation, he may have a holy affection strong enough to resist his passions, and overcome temptation. This holy affection is the prevailing motive. Again. Two men may be alike as to "the power of reason, and knowledge of right and wrong," and yet be totally unlike as to moral affection. Accordingly, although alike as to the power of reason, and knowledge of right and wrong, their conduct, prompted by different moral affections, may be widely different. The same as to external circumstances of temptation. One who is exposed to them, may have a strength of holy principle which will lead him uniformly to guard against them; another may have a depravity of heart, which will lead him to sinful compliance. All this is conformable to common experience, and results from the laws of the human mind. Though in all the respects mentioned by Dr. Ware, men may be alike, they may pursue very different courses, because they may be under the influence of very different internal motives. If this is what Dr. Ware means by "the power of choosing between different courses, or of yielding to the influence of either of two opposite motives;" we fully agree with him. We have exercised such a power every day of our life. We have chosen between two different courses. We have yielded to the influence of one or the other of two opposite external motives, just according to our predominant inclination or affection. And we have done the same with regard to those internal motives, which arise from our various natural appetites and passions. There may be a principle in the human mind, superior to all motives of this character. In every good man there is such a principle. He loves Christ more than any earthly object, and in comparison with him counts all things loss.

We assert too, that men have what Dr. Ware calls "the power of modifying the influences of the several powers, on both sides," by which they are acted upon, so that in similar circumstances, so far as he describes them, they may choose different courses, *according to their predominant disposition.* We always do modify the influence of all other motives by the grand motive, the reigning affection of the heart.

In all the passages above referred to, Dr. Ware has fallen short of a full statement of the case. The point at issue between us, is not whether two men, who are alike in some respects, and are acted upon by many similar motives, can choose differently; but whether they can choose differently when they are alike in *all* respects, that is, when *all* the proper antecedents of choice are the same. A difference in the prevailing affection of their minds, whatever else is alike, will always cause a difference of volition. But suppose everything which has the nature of a motive is the same in both; then what can be the cause of a difference of volitions? This is the question. We say, there never was any difference in such circumstances; that there never can be; and that to assert it, is to assert that a thing exists without a *cause*. For if effects require causes, a difference of effects requires a difference of causes. If there is anything in the mind which has no secondary or philosophical cause, it is an ultimate fact; dependent only on the divine appointment.

If it be said, that man, entirely under the control of motives, external or internal, is under the influence of necessity; my answer is, first, that the very supposition precludes *physical* necessity. Secondly, man is indeed under the necessity of being a rational and moral agent, and of acting as such. He is bound to this by the constitution given him by his Creator. He *must be* a rational and moral agent. And he *must be* influenced in all his actions in a manner suited to his rational and moral nature. This is all the necessity I assert. But this necessity, I acknowledge, is such, that no choice of a moral nature ever did take place, or ever can, without a motive. Minor motives, of various kinds and various degrees of strength, are constantly modified and overcome by one great, governing motive. But to say that man modifies these minor motives by one of superior strength, and that he has power to do this, is very different from saying, that he chooses or acts, or has power to choose or act in any other way, than *as influenced by the most powerful motive.*

"The sinner," Dr. Ware says, "is conscious of ill desert, because he is conscious of having been not only voluntary in the

sinful act, but free." We assert too that the sinner is conscious of being *free*, that is, free from physical force or coercion, and free from mental derangement; free in short, from everything which would suspend the laws of his intellectual nature, and every thing too which would prevent him from acting according to his choice, or from choosing according to motives. In such respects as these, he is *free;* and freedom of this kind is essential to his moral accountableness. But after all, that which renders him criminal is the fact, that he has a wrong disposition or affection of heart, and chooses and acts under its influence. So that, strictly speaking, the sinner's ill desert does not in any measure consist in his being voluntary and free, because voluntariness and freedom belong no more to him than to a Christian. His ill desert must consist in something which distinguishes him from one who is holy. And what is this but the fact, that he chooses and acts under the influence of a wrong motive, while one who is holy, chooses and acts under the influence of a right motive. The power of choosing right or wrong makes him a *moral agent.* His actually choosing *wrong* makes him a *sinner.* And this choice is the thing to be accounted for.

When Dr. Ware says, it is in a man's "power to submit either to the right or wrong motive," he says that which may indeed be very true, but which is after all very ambiguous, because it does not describe the case fully. A man may have two particular motives set before him, for example, a motive to speak the truth, and a motive to lie. But these two particular motives may not comprise everything which can influence his determination. The grand motive may lie in his moral principle, that is, the disposition or affection of his own heart. He may fear God; and this pious affection may give efficacy to the particular motive which prompts him to speak the truth. Or he may have a selfish affection, which will give efficacy to the other motive, and lead him to speak falsehood. It appears then that, besides those two motives, between which he is to decide, there are other motives, namely, the dispositions of his own mind, which, according to the law of his nature, must ultimately govern his choice. So that to say he has power

to yield to the one or the other of those two particular motives, seems to be only saying, that he has power to govern himself by a still more powerful motive than either, namely, the prevailing affection of the heart. But no man ever chose and acted contrary to that which was the prevailing affection of his heart at the time. To say therefore, that a man has power to yield to either of two opposite motives, leaving out the consideration of that inward motive which controls all others, is but a partial account of the matter, and so exposes our reasoning to perplexity.

Dr. Ware says he expects "to show that beings alike by nature, and placed in similar circumstances *as to all that is external to them*, may yet have an inherent principle of activity in the free exercise of which all that variety of moral character may be formed, which appears in the great human family." He says in a parallel passage, that it is in the free exercise of this principle, that men, in circumstances *in all other respects similar*, take different courses. But what does he mean by this *inherent principle of activity?* If he means the *predominant affection* or *disposition* of the heart, then the sentiment is, that in similar circumstances in all that is external to them, men will be prompted to pursue different courses by this predominant affection. To this view of the subject we fully accede. But if Dr. Ware means a principle of activity, which leads men in any case to choose and act otherwise than their predominant affection prompts them to do; then I must wait for him to show that there is such a principle or power in human nature, or that the supposition of such a principle can be reconciled with any just views of moral agency.

WHETHER A PROPENSITY TO SIN IS SINFUL.

In my Reply, I represented the very essence of sin as consisting in a *propensity*, *inclination*, or *disposition* to sin. Dr. Ware thinks that a propensity to sin is not sinful, and implies no guilt. In my apprehension, as well as in Dr. Ware's, the dispute on this point arises in a great measure from the fact, that we "annex dif-

ferent ideas to the word *propensity*." By propensity to sin Dr. Ware evidently means nothing but "the natural appetites, affections, and passions," such as "a strong appetite for intoxicating liquor, irritability of temper, and strength of passion." Now I grant, that these, considered merely as original properties of human nature, are not sinful, and imply no guilt. But I doubt much as to the propriety of calling any of these a propensity to sin, as they may all exist in one who is in heart and life entirely obedient to the divine law. A man's natural appetites are not in themselves sinful, because they have not a moral character. In their own nature, they are neither obedience nor disobedience. But in certain cases we are forbidden to gratify our natural appetites. Here our *moral* nature is brought into view. In these cases we are called to an exercise of our moral agency, which implies a moral affection. What then is our moral affection? Are we inclined to obey, or to disobey the command of God? This inclination or propensity to obey or disobey God, is what I mean by inclination or propensity to holiness or to sin. Dr. Ware speaks of a man's being withheld by *the fear of God* from yielding to temptation; of his *religiously* abstaining from the indulgence of his passions; and of his exercising a virtuous principle. Now this fear of God, this religious principle, is, in such a case, the governing principle of action; and this is what I mean by a propensity or disposition to obedience. But if a man, in such a case, has a propensity or disposition to disregard the divine command, and to pursue the gratification of his own passions, as his highest object, he has what I mean by a propensity or disposition to *sin*. This disposition or propensity, being of a moral character, is itself sinful,—the very essence of sin. There is no way in which men more frequently describe the character of one whom they consider as criminal, in distinction from those who are not criminal, than by saying, he has a real disposition or inclination to do wrong.

The sum of what I wished to say on this topic is this. If propensity to sin is taken to mean a *moral* propensity, an inclination or affection of a *moral* nature, it is certainly sinful. The very existence of such an inclination or affection is sin, or there can be

no such thing as sin in the world. If it is said, the sin consists in yielding to temptation; my reply is, that such yielding never takes place without a *disposition* to yield, and that this *disposition*, after all, constitutes the sin of yielding. But if *propensity to sin* is used to denote any of those appetites and passions which are essential to our animal, social, or intellectual nature; then certainly it is not, in itself, sinful; and it becomes sinful only when a man is led by a wrong disposition or state of mind, to give it an improper or forbidden indulgence.

DIVINE FOREKNOWLEDGE AND PREDETERMINATION.

Dr. Ware says, "I admit that no unforeseen occurrence can take place; but does it hence follow, that no event *not predetermined* can take place? That may be foreseen, respecting which there is no determination." He compares the divine foreknowledge to that knowledge which *we* have of a future event; and he seems to argue that God may foreknow what will take place without determining it, because *we* may.

Here it is important to keep in mind, that every event which takes place, is dependent on its proper causes; a physical event on physical causes; and a moral event on moral causes. An event in the moral world is distinguishable from an event in the physical world, not as being less dependent on proper causes, but as being dependent on causes of a different nature. It is as common and as proper to inquire for the causes of a particular instance of murder or suicide, as for the causes of the tides or the trade winds. The conduct of Peter in denying Christ, of Judas in betraying him, and of Pilate in delivering him up to be crucified, proceeded as really from moral causes, as thunder or the rainbow proceeds from physical causes.

Come then to our subject. I may know that an event will hereafter take place, from the knowledge I have of its causes, or the regular laws of nature respecting it. From my knowing what are the *causes* of an eclipse, I know that an eclipse will at such a

time take place. I may also know that an event will take place, because I have been informed of it by one who is entitled to my confidence. Now whether my knowledge of a future event results from my acquaintance with its causes, or from the declaration of those who possess higher intelligence than I do, it does not necessarily imply any predetermination or design in me respecting the event; because neither the occurrence of the event, nor the causes of it depend at all on my determination or agency. But if the event depends on my agency as its cause, my foreknowledge of it implies design or purpose. If the products of my field depend on my agency in planting and cultivating it, then my knowing what the particular products will be, must imply that I have a design respecting them. I cannot know that there will be a crop of wheat unless it is my purpose to sow wheat. This then is obvious, that just so far as any future event, or its cause, is dependent on my agency, my foreknowledge of it implies that I have a purpose or design respecting it.

It is equally true that events in the moral world have their appropriate causes. If those events are to take place without any dependence on me; then my foreknowing them implies no purpose or design in me. But if any events in the moral world, or their causes, are dependent on me, my foreknowing them implies that I have a design respecting them.

The general principle above stated is capable of as clear proof as any truth in natural science. And it applies in all its extent, to the subject under consideration. All events in the natural and moral world are effects, and dependent on their appropriate causes. Those causes are dependent ultimately on God. He constituted the connection between them and their effects. The whole system of physical and moral causes was appointed by the all wise Creator. His knowledge of the effects implies a knowledge of their causes. And his knowledge of causes and effects which depend on him, implies that he has a purpose or determination respecting them.

The conclusiveness of the argument which supports our theory is obvious, if all events in the physical and moral world do really

depend on physical and moral causes. But if they do not depend on physical and moral causes, they must either be ultimate facts, and so depend immediately on the agency of God without any secondary causes, as creation did; or they must be *self-existent.* But no man of sober understanding can believe either of these. If according to the scheme of my opponent, events in the moral world depend on the self-determining power of man's will as their proper cause; it affects not the strength of the present argument. For surely no one can doubt that this cause, as well as all others, was appointed by God, and that the connection which it has with its effects is what he determined it should be. To say, that God created man's will and endued it with a power to act in such a manner, and that he knew exactly how it would act under the influence of all the causes which would operate upon it, and yet that it was not his design that it should act thus, would be a solecism. For if it was not his design that it should act thus, why did he form it in such a manner, and place it under the operation of such causes, as he knew would lead to such a result?

From the view we have taken of the subject, it becomes, I think, very evident, that Dr. Ware's attempt to make a separation between the divine foreknowledge and the divine purpose cannot succeed. The foreknowledge and purpose of man may be separate, except when the events foreknown depend on his purpose and agency. But as the whole system of things, the whole series of causes and effects in the natural and moral world, depend on God's will; his knowledge of future events is nothing but the knowledge of what will result from those very causes which he himself has appointed and put in operation. If there were any event in the creation, which did not result from causes appointed and regulated by God, I acknowledge he might foreknow that event without any purpose respecting it. But nothing like this can be found. The whole system of created things depends on God's will. And he foreknows the events which are to occur in that system, as resulting from causes which he appoints. And this is only saying, he foreknows them exactly *as they are.*

Dr. Ware says, "that the simple foreknowledge of God has no

influence in producing the event foreknown. It has no relation to the causes, whether physical or moral, by which it is to be produced; but only to the certainty of the event." The event then, according to what is implied in this very passage, is to be produced by causes, either physical or moral. Foreknowledge does not produce the event, because it does not produce its proper causes. Those causes depend not on God's knowledge. On what do they depend? We say they depend not on God's foreknowledge, but on an act of his will. They result from his appointment. Thus he foreknows the event, as depending on its proper causes; and he foreknows those causes as depending on his appointment. Hence Dr. Ware's representation that foreknowledge does not produce the event foreknown, nor the causes of that event, helps us to prove the necessity of something which does produce them, which must be an act of God's will.

But Dr. Ware tries to relieve the difficulty by this representation: "The purpose of God is not a purpose that beings endowed with certain powers shall perform certain specific acts; but that they shall be exposed to certain influences, to the operation of certain motives, and that certain consequences shall follow the choice they freely make. It is not, that Peter or Judas shall actually make *this* choice, and pursue *this* course;—but thus, Peter shall have the power of choosing and pursuing this or the opposite course, and according as he shall pursue the one or the other, he shall be rewarded or punished."—"It was predetermined that the being in question should act freely, not that it should perform the specific act which it did perform."

According to this, God determines that men, constituted as they are, "shall be exposed to certain influences, to the operation of certain motives," which are the only causes of volition; but he does not determine what shall be the effect of those causes. He determines everything but the choice which men actually make. He determines to make them just such beings, to put them in just such a situation, to expose them to the operation of just such causes; and he perfectly knows what will be their choice under the influence of those causes; but he does not determine what

that choice shall be. All this appears to me as strange as to assert that God determines the causes of the rainbow, but not the rainbow itself—that he determines the causes of an earthquake, but does not determine the earthquake. The connection between moral causes and effects is as certain as between physical causes and effects. And it is as inconceivable, that God should determine the causes without determining the effects, in one case as in the other. But Dr. Ware says; "it was determined that the being in question should *act freely*." But how? Did God determine that he should perform the free act which he does perform? No. Did God determine that he should perform any other free act? No. How then? It must be thus. God determined that he should *act freely*,—but "not that he should perform the specific act which he does perform," nor any other;—determined that he should *act*, and, if he should happen to act in this way or that, that he should act *freely;*—or determined that he should *act freely*, if he should act at all, though that was left quite undecided. Let us examine this statement in relation to Pilate. It was determined that he should *act freely*, whether he released Jesus, or delivered him up to be crucified. But God knew that he would deliver up Jesus. And if, when God determined that he should *act freely*, he had his eye upon any particular act, it must have been upon the one which he knew would be performed. Accordingly, if God determined that he should perform *any act whatever*, or that he should *act at all*, he must have determined that he should perform the act which he did perform. This is the question to be decided; did God determine that he should perform *that specific act?* Dr. Ware answers, God did not determine this. But Peter and John say, Acts 4: 27, 28, that Pilate and the other enemies of Christ were gathered together, to do *whatever the hand and counsel of God had determined before to be done;* or as Schleusner renders it,—what in his pleasure and will he had decreed to be done.

So we say in all cases. God determined that men should *act freely* in the very manner in which they do act; or that they should perform those very *free acts* which they do perform; as

there is no other conceivable way in which God could either determine that they should act at all, or appoint the moral causes that should influence them. But the statement of Dr. Ware is enigmatical. God determined that men should *act freely;* but not in that particular way in which they do act, nor in any other way particularly, but in some way indefinitely, not implying any specific act whatever. Accordingly, if men should carry God's determination into effect exactly, they would *act*, it seems, *and act freely*, but would perform *no one particular act;* because, though *action* was determined, it was *such* action, if such there be, as implies no particular act.

It is a subject of astonishment to me, that my opponents are not impressed with the frequency and the explicitness with which the Scriptures assert the doctrine which I maintain. The inspired writers teach that God, in a thousand instances, predetermines the good and bad actions of men, as well as the moral causes of those actions, and the ends to be answered by them. It would be impossible for me to express this doctrine in stronger or more unequivocal language, than that which the Scriptures use. Why then do men, professing to believe the Scriptures, reject the doctrine? Simply, because they think it inconsistent with man's moral agency, and with God's attributes. But I have never seen a particle of proof that it is inconsistent with either. It is most evidently as consistent with God's attributes, as it is to determine the general system of the moral universe; for the general system is a nonentity, except as it is made up of particular parts. And the system of causes, which all will allow God has put in operation, is an empty sound, except as it includes those effects which result from it. And as to *moral agency*, there is not a single thing belonging to it, which is infringed by our doctrine. Nay; that determination and agency of God on which all causes and effects depend, establish and preserve moral agency. It is easy to show that there are as many and as great difficulties attending moral agency, from God's foreknowledge, as from his purpose. For Dr. Ware owns, that it is obviously impossible for the fact not to be, which is foreknown. But it is said, divine knowledge does not

make it impossible. True. But there is *some* cause of its impossibility. And what is that? — God's foreknowledge implies also a certainty of the event foreknown. But it is said, it does not *cause* that certainty. True again. But there *is* a cause of that certainty. The event could not be certain, did not something make it certain. Now what is the cause of the certainty of the event which is foreknown? Show the cause of the impossibility which Dr. Ware allows in the one case, and of the certainty he allows in the other, and you show all that our doctrine contains.

To conclude. What has taken place in regard to the doctrine of the divine purpose, strikingly exemplifies the truth of a remark before made; namely; that men are led, by the consideration of difficulties which they cannot solve, to reject doctrines supported by the clearest evidence. The evidence, both rational and Scriptural, on which this doctrine rests, is as near demonstration, as the evidence of metaphysical or moral truth in any case whatever. And I cannot but think it unworthy of those, who boast of inquiring freely and independently after the truth, and of following boldly whithersoever it may lead, to suffer themselves to start back from a doctrine resting on so firm a basis, and to be governed by misconceptions which a thorough examination might quickly correct, or perplexed with difficulties which the light of divine truth might enable them fully to solve.

CURSORY OBSERVATIONS.

I shall now make a few brief remarks on passages which I find here and there in Dr. Ware's Answer, without any regard to order.

Dr. Ware speaks, of "the strain of popular eloquence which runs through" a part of my Reply. He says, "nothing is more easy than thus to turn an adversary's argument or opinion into ridicule by a broad caricature;" and he undertakes to repel the ridicule, by showing how a similar strain of irony may be applied to the opposite opinion. But there is a plain difference between

the two cases. My object, as stated p. 116, was to try the correctness of the principle which Dr. Ware's reasoning involves, by showing what must follow from the admission of it. I did not mean to give a caricature. I aimed not at ridicule or rant, but sober argument. I supposed then, and still suppose, that I pointed out the real consequences of Dr. Ware's opinion. And it would certainly have been well for him to show, at least in some important particulars, that his opinion does not lead to such consequences. This, however, he does not attempt. But instead of this, he makes an effort to degrade orthodoxy by a strain of irony and sarcasm, in which he does not even pretend to regard justice or truth. I say he does not pretend to do this. For after he has given such license to his pen, he tells us with his customary frankness, pp. 74, 75, that he does not mean what he has written "should be taken for serious argument;" and makes an apology for "adopting such a strain of levity," and "thereby violating the decorum he intended to observe." This very honorable apology forbids the remarks I should otherwise have offered on the pages referred to.

Dr. Ware denies that Pharaoh, Jeroboam, and Judas can be considered as examples of human nature. He says, p. 66, "I might with as much propriety mention Moses, David, and Paul, as examples of human nature; for, so far as moral character is in question, we have no more evidence that they owed theirs to the special influence of the Spirit of God, than that the others owed their opposite characters to a special influence." I have quoted this passage for the purpose of showing to what lengths Dr. Ware's scheme of religion has carried him. He thinks there is no more reason to say that Moses, David, and Paul had any special influence of the Spirit in becoming pious, than Pharaoh, Jeroboam, and Judas had in becoming impious; in other words, that men of the most depraved and most hateful character are as really indebted to a special influence of the Spirit for the formation of their character, as the most virtuous and holy are. According to this, the vilest men have as much reason to thank God for giving them his special influence to excite them to wick-

edness, as the most godly have to thank him for giving them his special influence to excite them to holiness. I am persuaded that Dr. Ware would shudder at the thought of such consequences. He could not follow his assertion into these obvious results, without doing violence to every principle of piety.

I had urged, in my Reply, that no injustice is done to those who are left to remain in sin and perish, because they receive no more than what they deserve. They are punished only according to their ill desert. Dr. Ware says; "this might be urged with a semblance of justice, were the sinfulness in question their own act, and not the act of God." He means to assert that, according to the orthodox theory, the sins of the wicked are not their own acts, but the acts of God. But upon what grounds does he assert this? The first is, that, according to the orthodox theory, sinners are in that condition, in which they were placed by their Maker. In regard to this, I have already shown, again and again, that Dr. Ware's theory makes man as really dependent on God, and attributes his sins as really to God's agency, as the orthodox theory. I could easily prove in this place, if it were necessary, that the whole constitution of man, and all the laws or principles which govern his actions, and all the circumstances which attend him, are the wise appointment of God; that man is a being of such properties, that he is a moral agent, a proper subject of law; that his moral actions are truly and entirely his own; as really so when they commence in early life, as afterwards; that in perfect consistency with his dependence on God, he has all the properties which can belong to a created moral agent, and that his moral actions have all the properties which can make him justly responsible for them; that they are as much his own acts, are as voluntary, as free, as deliberate, and involve as complete and unshackled an exercise of his intellectual and moral powers, as upon any other theory. Indeed, it appears perfectly clear to my mind, that there is no theory which makes so clear and perfect a distinction as the orthodox, between the actions of God and the actions of men, or between holiness and sin, or which gives so just and satisfactory a view of moral agency.

The other particular reason which Dr. Ware suggests for the representation above referred to, is this; that according to the orthodox theory, the common grace granted to all is not sufficient to render it possible for them to become holy, the influence of the Spirit which is necessary to their sanctification being withheld.

On this I remark, first, that we assert the *possibility* of men's becoming holy, in every sense in which such possibility is necessary to the most perfect moral agency. We assert it in the plain, literal, proper sense. But there is a sense in which Dr. Ware himself denies it to be possible that that should be, which God foreknows will not be. If he should here assert, what he often suggests, the final holiness and salvation of all men, the difficulty would still remain. For there are some men who are very sinful at present, and God knew they would be sinful; and according to Dr. Ware, p. 95, it is of course impossible for them to be otherwise than sinful. And yet he considers them moral agents, justly chargeable with the criminality of their conduct. Now we assert no impossibility of man's becoming holy, which is attended with any more difficulty in relation to the present subject, than that which Dr. Ware asserts, and which every sober man must admit.

I remark, secondly, that it is not what is usually called the influence of the Spirit, or the grace of God, either common or special, that makes men capable of good and evil, and renders it righteous that God should punish them for their sins. They are made moral agents, and justly accountable for their actions, by the essential attributes of their minds. In consequence of God's giving them and continuing to them such rational and moral powers, it is proper that they should be placed under law, and recompensed according to their conduct. Whatever other favors are bestowed or withheld, men are fit subjects of moral government, while they possess those faculties which constitute them moral agents.

Before Dr. Ware has done with this point, he repeats, perhaps the tenth or twentieth time, what I am sorry he ever repeated once; I mean that vulgar charge, which contains too much apparent truth to be directly denied, and yet too much falsehood to be

admitted, namely, that we represent men to be as God made them, *incapable* of any good till renewed by *irresistible* influence, — irreversibly appointed to destruction without any regard to their sins, etc. I shall not stop to animadvert upon this. But there is one passage in the same paragraph, on which I must detain the reader a moment. And I do it to show again, to what results Dr. Ware is carried by his scheme of religion. He says; "If it is clear that God did not determine to regenerate men from any foresight of repentance and good works, it must be equally certain that he did not appoint the unregenerate to perish, from any foresight of their impenitence and sins." The principle which is clearly implied in this passage, is, that those who are regenerate as really deserved regeneration for the good works they performed before regeneration, as those who are finally impenitent deserve to perish for their sins. God's foreknowledge and determination must correspond with facts, or regard things as they are. So that, if it is as certain that God determines to convert or save men from a foresight of their good works, as that he determines to destroy men from a foresight of their sins; then he does actually convert or save men as much from a regard to their good works, as he destroys men from a regard to their sins. And if God actually bestows the blessing as much on account of good works, as he inflicts the punishment on account of sins; it must be that the righteous are as really deserving of salvation, as the wicked are of destruction. How this can be reconciled with the feelings of a Christian, with the common language of devotion, and with the declarations of the New Testament on the subject, I must leave to be made out by those who feel competent to the task.

Dr. Ware tells his readers, that my saying in one sentence that men are ordained to wrath *for their sins*, and in another, that the elect are chosen without any foresight of faith or good works as causes moving to the choice, is not the less *inconsistent* for having been stated by the Westminster Divines. I reply, that it is not the less *consistent* for that.

In his Letters Dr. Ware had said; "Love to Christ will depend on our view of the nature and value of the benefits we receive

through him, and not at all on the rank he holds in the scale of being." This I represented as implying, that our love to Christ will be the same, both in kind and degree, whether he is possessed of mere *human* perfection, or of *divine* perfection; and this, as implying that *human* perfection is entitled to as high a regard, as *divine*. Dr. Ware, in his Answer, endeavors to show that my reasoning is without any force, because it cannot be supposed that we receive the same benefits from man, or from any created being, as from God. It is obvious that my reasoning had no reference to the *benefits* received through Christ, which were mentioned by Dr. Ware as the sole ground of our love to him, but merely to his unguarded assertion, that our love to Christ does not depend at all on the rank he holds in the scale of being. I should have pursued a more proper course, had I said that the consideration of the benefits received from Christ is of great importance in exciting our love, but that this is not the only thing concerned; that the consideration of his own personal excellence, or the rank he holds in the scale of being, is also of great importance, and that denying this leads to such absurd consequences as I described. For if our love to Christ does not depend at all on his rank in the scale of being, then clearly, whether his rank be that of a man or a God, our love to him, so far as that rank is concerned, should be the same. It might be of special importance to show also, that the consideration of his own personal excellence, or his rank in the scale of beings, cannot be separated from the consideration of his benefits; as it would be absurd to suppose that any creature can bestow such benefits, as come from the Creator. But from a view of all which Dr. Ware has written on the subject, I am led to think he did not mean, absolutely, that our love to Christ does not depend at all on his rank in the scale of being, but that it does not depend on this *primarily*, that this is not the *chief* consideration. Had he said this, my remarks would have been different, though I should still have thought the sentiment exceptionable.

But there is no end to controversy in this form; and I would rather my reasoning should be left in that awkward condition, in

which it is made to appear in some of the minor criticisms of my antagonist, than to weary my readers and myself by extending my rejoinder to any greater length. I determined at the commencement of these remarks, to confine myself to the discussion of those points on which the decision of the controversy must depend. There are indeed hundreds of passages which I have not noticed, which are, in my view, liable to strong objections.

In Dr. Ware's last publication, as well as in the former, there are many remarkable instances of fairness and candor in controversy, and many indications of sincerity and kindness, which I have noticed with great pleasure, and which cannot fail to excite feelings of personal respect and attachment towards him in the minds of all unprejudiced readers. But every new examination of the subject of controversy adds new strength to my conviction, that the system which he has labored so zealously to defend, is *radically erroneous*, and of *fatal tendency*, and that the system which he opposes, is the truth of God. The religious system set forth in his publications, and in the writings of the most respectable Unitarians in this country and in Europe, overlooks *the ruined state of man.* This is the grand, fundamental error of Unitarians. And we can have no expectation that they will accede to our views respecting the grace of God in redemption, the design of Christ's death, the work of the Holy Spirit, the eternal purpose of God respecting the extent of salvation, and other kindred doctrines of God's word, so long as they entertain such an opinion as they now do, of man's native purity and goodness. But if they should be feelingly convinced, as I hope through the mercy of God they will be, that all men are by nature totally sinful, and totally ruined, children of wrath, and that God would be perfectly just and holy should he leave them without exception to perish forever; they would have little difficulty in respect to the other doctrines which our system contains. This conviction of sin and ruin gives a fatal blow to pride and self-righteousness; it leads to repentance and faith, and is the basis of evangelical religion. It must be obvious even to our opponents, that such a conviction necessarily involves the belief of the

other doctrines with which it stands connected in our system. And it is very obvious to us, that where this conviction is wanting, there will always be difficulties and perplexities respecting the doctrines of orthodoxy. The controversy appears, in this view, to be as much a matter of *feeling*, as of *reasoning;* and it ought to be treated accordingly.

Having now closed my remarks, I would bend the knee in earnest prayer to God, in behalf of myself and my opponent, that whatever is erroneous in our views of religion may be corrected; that whatever has been wrong in our mode of conducting this controversy may be forgiven; and that what we have both written may be made subservient to the cause of truth and love.

LETTERS

TO

REV. NATHANIEL W. TAYLOR, D.D.

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LETTERS TO DR. TAYLOR.

LETTER I.

Reverend and Dear Sir,

I entirely agree with you in considering free discussion to be of great importance to the cause of divine truth. It is obvious, however, that free discussion cannot be expected to produce its proper effects, unless it is prompted by a right spirit, and conducted in a right manner. It behooves us therefore to inquire very carefully, what is that spirit and that manner, in which free discussion should be conducted. In answering this inquiry, we may be essentially aided by many passages of Scripture, and particularly by the following direction of Paul, who, as we well know, was far from being deficient either in warmth of natural temper, or in Christian decision. "The servant of the Lord," he says, "must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." Even towards those who are hostile to religion, the Apostle requires that such a disposition and conduct should be exhibited. Now if all men, — if even those who wage war against Christianity, are nevertheless entitled to a treatment from us, marked with meekness and gentleness; surely these virtues ought to be exercised in all their strength and loveliness towards those who, notwithstanding some differences of opinion, are united with us in the bonds of fraternal affection, and devoted to the same benevolent cause.

My present design, I am well aware, is attended with circumstances of peculiar delicacy. I have undertaken to address myself to a respected and beloved Brother, from whom I am constrained to differ, — a Brother invested with the same sacred office with myself, both as a minister of the gospel and a Professor of Christian Theology. And I cannot but notice the circumstance also, that there has been in our country scarcely an instance, before the present, in which a teacher of Christian Theology in an orthodox Institution, has come before the public in his own name, to controvert the opinions of another man placed in a similar station. This circumstance makes a touching appeal to my feelings, and excites in me a desire which words cannot fully express, that everything relative to the manner of the present discussion may be unexceptionable. It cannot be thought improbable that, among the Professors of our numerous Seminaries, there will be differences of opinion, more or less important, and that these differences will be made the subject of free investigation. Now, my Dear Brother, as we have been led to think it our duty to engage in the difficult and perilous business of publicly discussing controverted points; let us consider well what is before us, and guard with sacred care against everything which would render our example unworthy of imitation, or in any way injure the great interests which we wish to advance. Who can count up the evils which might result to the cause of Christ, if our manner of treating controverted subjects should in any respects be such, as would tend to promote in others around us, and especially in our pupils, feelings of unkindness and acrimony? On the contrary, may we not hope that important good will result from our example, if, whenever we engage in discussing such subjects, under all the excitements and provocations attending public debate, we may be enabled by divine grace, to copy the meekness and gentleness of Christ? When I dwell on such reflections as these, I cannot avoid the persuasion, that I should commit a less offence against the Christian religion by *bad reasoning*, than by a *bad spirit;* and therefore that I am bound to take as much pains at least, to cherish right *feelings*, as to frame right *arguments*. But a

Christian disposition pervading our writings is not only required by the spirit of our religion, but is necessary to the success of our cause; since, without it, our opinions and arguments, especially those which we may regard as improvements, will not be likely to pass easily and pleasantly into the minds of others; as we may have frequently found by our own experience.

It will undoubtedly be a question with some good men, whether it can in any circumstances conduce to the welfare of the church, for Christian ministers, and especially for Professors in our Theological Seminaries, to enlist in a public discussion of the topics on which they differ. And I readily acknowledge that controversy, or even the appearance of controversy among Theological Professors, is likely to be attended with peculiar danger, as the feelings of their pupils and the vital interests of their respective Institutions must be so much involved. On this account, I have felt a strong reluctance to take any part in the examination of those peculiar opinions which you have exhibited before the public. But after all, is there any sufficient reason why we should be deprived of the right, or rather, exempt from the duty, of bearing testimony against the errors of the day, and especially against whatever we may consider erroneous in one another? Is it not a matter of special propriety that we should hold ourselves responsible, in a sense, to each other, and to all devout Christians in the community? Is there anything in our situation or employment, which can free us from this responsibility? Nay, is it not true that we are peculiarly responsible? And is it not true also that we are, in some respects, peculiarly liable to error? Now if at any time we are betrayed into wrong opinions; especially if we make those opinions public; can we expect or even desire to escape animadversion? I well know what noble sentiments you have expressed in relation to this subject, and how often you have invited your brethren to a thorough and unsparing examination of your opinions. And I trust you will now join with me in saying; *Let the Christian community watch over our Theological Seminaries with an ever wakeful eye. Let these Seminaries extend a kind but faithful inspection over one another. Let no deviation from sound*

doctrine pass unnoticed. If any of those who are appointed to give instruction to the rising ministry, show the least signs of error; — if they only begin to indulge in modes of interpreting the word of God, or in modes of reasoning on moral or metaphysical subjects, which have an unfavorable, or even doubtful tendency in regard to the fundamental doctrines of Christianity; let all the teachers of religion in our Churches, Colleges and Seminaries be awake to the danger. It is far better for the cause of divine truth that this general wakefulness to danger should rise to an extreme, — better that solicitude, and fear, and even jealousy should be excited, than that those who are appointed to stand as Zion's watchmen, should slumber on their posts.

I cannot but feel that every public teacher of religion needs the vigilant inspection of his brethren. Indeed, where is the pious minister of Christ who has not this feeling in regard to himself, and who does not find reason for it in his own experience? And where is the intelligent Christian, who has not at times detected in himself the commencement of such habits of thinking, as might lead on to wide departures from the truth as it is in Jesus? The darkness of the human mind and the strength of unholy passion are such even in Christians, and the causes of error are so various and powerful, and some of them so latent, that it can never be deemed safe to trust the interests of religion implicitly in the hands of any man. No fertility of genius, no extent of learning, no metaphysical acumen, and no degree of piety, can be relied upon as affording full security. Formerly, when I turned my thoughts towards particular ministers of the gospel, and particular Christians, I was ready to think it impossible, that they should ever abandon any of the truths of revelation, or embrace any hurtful error. But what I have seen of the human mind during more than thirty years in the ministry, and more than twenty in my present office, has led me to entertain other views on this subject, and has impressed my mind with a serious conviction, that there is no teacher of religion in our churches, or in our Seminaries, no, not one, who can think himself free from the danger of error, or who has not reason to apprehend that a deceived heart may turn

him aside. And if, in these days of adventurous speculation, any of those who are called by divine providence to instruct in our theological schools, should wholly or in part renounce the doctrines of revelation, and become advocates of error; it would only be a repetition of what has often occurred in past ages.

Now if every man, however learned and pious, however important or sacred his station, and however many safeguards may be placed around him, is in fact liable to error; then surely we ought to be aware of this, and to offer up fervent prayer to God, that he would give us a sound mind, and guide us into all the truth. We ought also to crave it as a privilege, that our Christian brethren would watch over us, and by their fraternal freedom, and their admonition when necessary, and especially by their prayers, would help to secure us against the wrong tendencies of our minds, and to establish our hearts in divine truth.

Our acknowledged liability to error should lead us to check all undue confidence in our own opinions, and to hold ourselves ready to be instructed and corrected by others. It is no very uncommon thing for a man to manifest such reliance upon the strength of his own mind, and the correctness of his own reasoning, as clearly implies, though he may be unwilling to avow it in words, that he thinks himself infallible; at least, that he thinks himself much nearer to a state of infallibility than others. Let us keep ourselves at a great distance from everything like this; and in all our reasonings, especially if we ever venture on ground which lies beyond the range of common belief and common investigation, let us proceed with slow and cautious steps. And if at any time the friends of Christ, apprehending that we have begun to wander from the right way, suddenly raise the cry of alarm; instead of complaining of their want of confidence in us, or indulging any suspicions as to the motives which govern them; we ought to bless God that he has given them a heart to feel so lively an interest in the cause of truth, and to take so quick an alarm at the sight or even the apprehension of danger. We ought moreover to keep in mind, that however strong our persuasion may be that our present views are right, and the views of those who differ from us,

wrong; a little more time, more careful and patient inquiry, a further exercise of a modest, humble and pious temper, and a higher degree of divine teaching, may alter our convictions, and may show us that we have been standing on slippery places.

After the remarks that I have now made, and which I cannot but consider to be of special importance to those who are concerned in preparing young men for the ministry, I shall proceed to my particular object. Allow me then to lay aside all hesitation and reserve, and to give utterance to my thoughts just as they arise in my own mind.

In the first place, I shall take the liberty to make a few remarks as to the general aspect and tendency of what you have published. I refer particularly to your Concio ad Clerum, and to the several numbers in the Christian Spectator which are understood to come from your pen, on the means of regeneration.

Though the design of these letters does not require me to remark with the same freedom on what is excellent in your publications, as on what I deem faulty; yet my esteem for you and my regard to justice require me to say, that I have been gratified in no common degree with the clear and impressive illustrations you give of various important truths, and with the powerful and conclusive arguments which you urge in their support. And I would hope that the friends of evangelical truth and the friends of free inquiry generally, will not overlook what is valuable in the productions of your pen, because on some points they are constrained to dissent from you. I take pleasure also in acknowledging, that I have derived real benefit from the free discussion of subjects in the private correspondence which I have recently had with you.

In regard to the general aspect of your publications;—I have serious doubts, whether the prominence which you give to what is called *the philosophy of the Christian religion*, is adapted to promote the interests of the church.

I know not that I differ from you as to what constitutes *the philosophy of religion.* I understand by it something which is aside from the simple doctrines and facts which are set forth in the Scriptures; something which may be omitted without detracting

anything from the doctrines or facts themselves, or from their practical influence. It is that view of the subjects of revelation, which is suited to gratify the love of abstruse, metaphysical speculation, of what may be called, *the curiosity of intellect.* If a single example will be of use, I would refer to 1 Cor. xv. The Apostle affirms the simple, momentous truth, that men will be raised from the dead. The objector inquires, "*How* are the dead raised up?" He was looking after the *philosophy* of the doctrine. He wished to understand the *manner*, — the *quomodo.* The Apostle rebuked him for such a question, though he took occasion from it to give important instruction.

I could illustrate the meaning I give to the phrase by another example. The Scriptures teach that it is the influence of the divine Spirit, and that alone, which sanctifies the heart. Now if a man attempts to explain metaphysically the *manner* in which the Spirit operates upon the mind, and how his influence is consistent with our accountableness, and with the laws of our intellectual and moral nature; he enters on the philosophy of the doctrine of regeneration; — the very thing which our Saviour seems to have discouraged in his conversation with Nicodemus. If I were to select one of the most striking instances of dwelling on the philosophy of Christian doctrines, I should fix upon some parts of your Concio ad Clerum, and of the other publications of yours above referred to. It may in many cases be difficult to draw the line exactly between a Christian doctrine itself, and the philosophy of that doctrine. But that there is a difference between the one and the other is a fact which you yourself have been forward to affirm.

I have one more remark, namely, that there is a wide difference in point of clearness and importance between what would be called the philosophy of evangelical doctrines in one case, and in another. In one case, the investigation may relate to facts in man's intelligent and moral nature, or to principles in the divine government, which are certain and obvious. In another case, it may relate to what is uncertain, conjectural, or obscure; — in a word, to what lies beyond the limits of our intelligence. I con-

sider Edwards's metaphysical treatises to be, generally, of the former character. And it would be easy to name various works which are of the latter character.

You will perceive from these remarks, that I would not by any means indiscriminately proscribe every form and degree of philosophical investigation on the subjects of religion. I readily allow that such investigation, particularly of the former character above named, may, if rightly directed and kept in its proper place, be of real use to ministers, and especially to Theological Professors, and may enable them to attain to more profound and consistent views of the doctrines of Christianity, and to illustrate those doctrines more clearly, and defend them more successfully, than they could without it. But every man who applies himself with ardor to the philosophical investigation of Christian doctrines, will probably find it more difficult than he was previously aware of, to confine himself to that investigation which is of the right kind, to give it a right direction, and to keep it in its proper place. He will constantly be in danger of carrying it to an extreme; and of forming such a habit of mind, that the most essential truths, if stated simply in a Scriptural manner, will give him no pleasure. Who that is fond of contemplating the doctrines of religion metaphysically, has not been conscious of a tendency to this faulty habit of mind? If I mistake not, the circumstances of the present day, particularly the opposition made against the doctrines of revelation on the ground of philosophy, expose us to this danger in a more than ordinary degree. We may deem it a sacred duty to meet our opponents on the ground which they have chosen. And while performing this duty, we may fall into a philosophical habit of thinking, and a philosophical manner of stating and defending the doctrines of the Bible. And we may come at length to make philosophy the main business of the pulpit. Now should this in any measure prevail, it would certainly prove a calamity to the souls of men. Just as it would be a calamity to persons, who came hungry to a feast to which they were invited, if instead of receiving wholesome food, they should be entertained with a philosophical discourse on the chemical properties of food, or on the

theory of digestion. Should the practice I have named prevail generally, and should there be a reign of *metaphysical* instead of *Scriptural* Theology; of a truth famine and desolation would spread through the churches of the land.

A minister of distinguished excellence in Connecticut told me, near the close of his sacred work, that during the first years of his ministry, he was in the practice of preaching *metaphysically*. At length he was led to make particular inquiry as to the usefulness of his public instructions. To his surprise and grief he was informed, that his preaching was universally unintelligible and unprofitable, both to the old and the young. He therefore determined that henceforth he would confine metaphysical investigation to his study, and would make it his object to *preach the gospel of Christ*. This determination, with a correspondent practice, was followed by the most happy consequences.

He who spake as never man spake, has given us a perfect pattern of the manner in which he would have us inculcate and defend the truths of his gospel. And to this is added the example of his apostles. Now if Christ and his apostles had deemed the philosophy of religion of any special consequence, they certainly would have suggested this to us. But did they suggest it? Did they recommend the philosophy of Christian doctrines, as among the means to be employed for the salvation of men? Instead of recommending it, did they not directly discountenance it? If then the ministers of religion at the present day should cease to receive the simplicity of divine truth, just as it is exhibited in the Bible, or cease to love it and be satisfied with it, and, in their public and private instructions, should give Christianity a *metaphysical* instead of a *Scriptural* aspect; would they not show that they had forgotten the example of their Lord and Master, and of his inspired apostles? And as the consequence of this, should we not witness a decay of vital piety, and a dark and ominous cloud spreading over the churches of Christ?

Whitefield preached the truth with uncommon simplicity and directness, and kept at the greatest distance from philosophical discussion; and with what success is well known to the world.

It is indeed true that some very impressive and successful ministers have much to do with the philosophy of Christianity. But in my opinion this circumstance detracts from the degree of their usefulness. If we could consult the sober experience of the most devout Christians, we should be satisfied that the success of ministers is, under God, owing to the simple truths of the Bible which they preach, and to the spirit of benevolence and piety which they manifest. Whatever they introduce into their ministrations which is abstruse, or metaphysical, or directly polemic in its nature, is generally very unwelcome to the hearts of those who are spiritually minded, and proves a serious hinderance to their growth in grace. Many a Christian complains to God in secret, that although he is blessed with an able and orthodox minister, he is so seldom fed with "the sincere milk of the word." And would it not be well for us, and for other ministers, to inquire, whether this has not been the case with some devout Christians who have been placed under our ministry?

Here, my Brother, we see our high responsibility in relation to the particular work which divine providence has assigned to us. It is a responsibility which may well make us tremble, and which should excite in us an unremitting watchfulness against whatever would injure the piety or usefulness of the rising ministry. God requires us to train up those, whose studies we are called to superintend, to be preachers, not of *philosophy* or *metaphysics*, but of the gospel. And in doing this, our chief business must be to teach them the truth in all its Scriptural plainness and purity, making the word of God our standard both as to the *matter* and the *manner* of our instructions. If this is neglected, whatever else is done, our Seminaries will certainly fail of accomplishing the great object for which they were founded. If our love for the Bible, or for divine truth as set forth in the Bible, declines; if we begin to think that Christianity must be invested with the costume of philosophy; especially, if we begin to take more interest in this philosophical costume, than in Christianity itself; there will be inevitable loss and injury to that precious cause which it is our first duty to promote; the God of Zion will be offended; and it

will soon be said of our sacred Seminaries, if not of ministers and churches, — *the glory is departed.* . . . . Suppose we had good reason to expect, that at the close of each Academic year, the blessed Jesus would travel through the land, as he travelled through Judea and Galilee eighteen hundred years ago, and would visit each of those Seminaries which have been consecrated to him. What influence would such an expectation have upon our feelings and conduct? Would it not in all probability occasion some visible changes in the direction of our studies, in the use of our pens, in our instructions, and in our prayers? Amid our high and holy efforts to prepare ourselves and our pupils for such a Visitant, would not some of the investigations which we so fondly pursue, and some of the opinions for which we are apt so warmly to contend, lose their hold upon our minds? And would not some other things which we are prone to overlook, quickly rise to great importance in our view?

Now all which is implied in this supposition, and much more, is virtually a reality. For the Blessed Saviour, instead of visiting us once in a year, is in spirit continually present with us; and continually says to us, "I am he who searcheth the reins and the hearts." All that we do in study and conversation, all that we teach, and all that we write, is under his eye. O! then, what vigilance and zeal should we exercise in taking care of the precious interests which he has committed to our trust! With what pious docility and diligence should we endeavor to know the mind of God in his word! And how earnestly should we prosecute the great business of preparing our pupils to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ! When I dwell on these reflections, I become conscious that I have bestowed too much time and attention on some subjects of speculation, which have little or no connection with the spiritual interests of Christ's kingdom. And let me inquire, whether the circumstances in which you have been placed have never betrayed you into the same mistake; and in particular whether you have never been led to attach too much importance to the mere philosophy of religion? It is my sincere opinion that you have. Even if your philosophical views were all unex-

ceptionable in the matter of them; it would, I think, be evident, that you have assigned them too high a place. And although the essential doctrines of the gospel may continue, amid your boldest speculations, to maintain a commanding influence over your own mind; this I fear will not be the case generally with those who shall adopt your philosophical mode of thinking and speaking on the subjects of religion. They will be likely either to hold the peculiar doctrines of the gospel loosely, or to pass over them as comparatively unimportant, or to explain and defend them merely on philosophical principles. Those who do the last of these must, to be consistent, practically adopt the maxim, that the meaning of Scripture must bend to their philosophy, and not their philosophy to Scripture. And thus they will cease to make the Bible the only and sufficient rule of their faith; and by whatever name they may call themselves, or their metaphysical theories, they will not in the end be far from the confines of infidelity.

There is still another evil to be apprehended. Is it not probable that the practice, to which you have given the sanction of your example, of laying out so much zeal on the philosophy of religion, will occasion unhappy differences and dissensions among those who have heretofore been of one mind as to the doctrines of the gospel? The Apostle Paul would have ministers *charged before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit;* and he shows a decided disapprobation of those who *dote about questions of words, whereof cometh envy and strife.* Who will assert that the instructions and precepts of the Apostle in regard to this subject are in no sense applicable to ministers at this day? Could the Apostle be now personally present with us, are we sure that he would not charge us to cease contending about words to no profit, and to desist from questions and discussions which gender strife among the friends of Christ, instead of promoting godly edifying? To give prominence to abstruse, metaphysical speculation, is the direct and certain way to foster division. Good men may agree, and substantially do agree, so far as the essential principles of Christianity are concerned. But as to the philosophy of religion, there is no prospect of their being agreed. Now it is certainly

of vast moment at the present day, that the friends of evangelical religion should be of one mind and one heart in opposing the common enemy, and in endeavoring to advance the essential interests of Christ's kingdom. With these great interests in view, who of us can be inclined to agitate subjects, which are of such a nature, and which lead so far beyond the common bounds of thought, that neither ministers nor Christians can be expected to come to an agreement concerning them? Especially, who can think it advisable or safe to do this, when the disagreement which will thus be produced in regard to things of little value, will be likely, according to the known principles of human nature, gradually to extend its influence to things of greater value, and ultimately to show itself in relation to the fundamental doctrines of the Bible? However praise-worthy the motives which may have influenced you in your late publications; I apprehend that the nature of some of the discussions you have introduced, and your mode of conducting them, are suited to occasion the evils above hinted at. Indeed have not these evils already begun to appear? And is there any way to check these evils, and to promote the peace and prosperity of the churches, but by refraining from abstruse and unprofitable speculations, and confining ourselves to the great business of understanding, obeying, and teaching God's holy word!

If we examine the history of the church in past ages, we shall find that a prevailing taste among the clergy for abstruse, metaphysical speculation, and the practice of mixing human philosophy with divine truth, has been a source of constant strife among the followers of Christ, and of endless mischief to the interests of his kingdom. When those who have stood foremost among the ministers of Christ, and who have been possessed of distinguished powers of mind, have shown a dislike to the beaten track in which the excellent of the earth have walked, and a thirst for innovation or distinction; especially when they have a spirit to defy resistance, and to press on, reckless of consequences; then have the churches been torn asunder by the violence of strife; then has Christianity itself been wounded by the disputes and conten-

tions of its teachers and its friends. And ought we not, with great humility and fear, to remember the dreadful fact, that scarcely any pernicious error has ever prevailed in the Christian church, which did not originate with ministers of the gospel?

These remarks are by no means intended to discountenance free inquiry, or to fetter theological investigation. My only wish is, to show the importance of conducting free inquiry and unfettered investigation on right principles, and of forming a habit of thinking soberly and justly on the subjects of religion. And it has become a leading principle with me, that to think soberly and justly on the subjects of religion, is to conform exactly to the inspired writers, — to go as far as they go, and no further. Now the philosophical speculations on which you have bestowed the greatest zeal, and which contain the points of difference between you and your brethren, are speculations which manifestly lead beyond the instructions of the Bible. You yourself consider them as distinct from "the fundamental doctrines of the gospel;" and while you differ from most orthodox ministers in New England in regard to these speculations, it seems you are "not aware of any departure in any article of doctrinal belief," from what they commonly hold. For it is well known that they commonly hold the doctrines of the gospel, as these are stated by your revered Instructor, Dr. Dwight, and with whom you also profess to agree in every article of doctrinal belief. The subjects of disagreement, then, you yourself consider to be aside from the doctrines of the gospel, and additional to them, relating chiefly to the mode of stating and explaining them. And yet does not the degree of zeal which you expend on these subjects naturally imply, that they are in your view more important, than those doctrines of the gospel in which you agree with others?

After expressing to you so frankly and decidedly how little importance comparatively I attach to the mere philosophy of religion, and how many evils will in my view be occasioned by giving a philosophical aspect to the doctrines of revelation, especially in discourses intended for popular instruction; I may perhaps be charged with inconsistency, when I proceed, according to my

present design, to a discussion of some of the most abstruse, metaphysical subjects, which ever employed the thoughts of men. But I have the plea of necessity. For I am persuaded not only that you have made your philosophical speculations too prominent, but that your speculations themselves are, in some important instances, very incorrect; that your philosophy is not only excessive in degree, but erroneous in some of its principles. And as these erroneous principles have in my view, an unfavorable and dangerous tendency as to those doctrines of revelation to which they relate; I cannot but deem it important, that they should be subjected to a fair examination. And this examination must require any one who undertakes it, to investigate those very philosophical questions which you have introduced. As to myself — I have been induced to take a part in this examination, because I have confidence in those distinguished servants of Christ, far and near, who have expressed their opinion, that it is a duty which I owe to the cause of truth. If I know my own heart, I undertake this work from a regard to that cause. And if, in the execution, I should be betrayed, as I may be, into the commission of any offence against the laws of Christian love, or Christian propriety; I should consider it as a fault not to be excused, but as deserving admonition from you, and confession from me.

Permit me to say, that I have often attempted to account for it, that you have come to entertain those philosophical opinions, against which I am now to object. And I have sometimes thought it possible these opinions may have arisen from the very circumstance above referred to, that you have bestowed upon them a disproportionate attention. It is indeed true in regard to most subjects, that they cannot be well understood without long and patient study, and that the want of this is a fruitful source of mistakes. But it is also a well known fact, that we are sometimes most liable to err in regard to a subject, on which we have expended the most intense study, and in which we have felt the most absorbing interest. This circumstance may disqualify us to judge correctly. I speak now of what every one who has been conversant with human affairs, must have noticed. We may pore over a subject with so excessive

an ardor, that our mental vision will become disordered. In such a case, a just opinion must be expected not from us, but from those who have given to the subject under consideration only such a degree of attention as its importance will justify, and who of course will be able to weigh it with an unbiassed, unperverted judgment.

But it may be after all, that your views are not what they are generally understood to be, and that I and others have been misled by what is peculiar in your manner of communicating your thoughts. There is unhappily a something, (I would not take upon me to say definitely what it is,) which makes it necessary for your readers generally to go over your pages again and again, and sometimes leaves them still in doubt whether they have arrived at your meaning. Now I love to cherish the hope, that when, by means of a more patient search, or by additional explanations from you, we shall come to apprehend clearly the sense of what you have written, just as it lies in your own mind, we shall be in a measure relieved of our difficulties. But as the case is, we must consider your opinions as they are exhibited in writing. We must interpret your language in the common way, having no liberty to conjecture that you may have any meaning or modification of meaning in your mind, except what you have intelligibly expressed.

In the very free animadversions which I am about to offer, I shall not indulge myself in the too common practice of discoloring or exaggerating the opinions to be controverted; nor shall I allow myself, either from negligence or design, to mistake your meaning. But as I shall be liable to this, and well knowing that you have often felt it proper to complain of being misunderstood, and apprehending that you may be inclined to repeat this complaint; I have judged it best to adopt the following plan of remarking, — a plan which it is evident will be as just and candid to you, as safe for me.

In respect to each of the subjects which I shall bring under discussion, I will carefully endeavor to ascertain what sentiments you have advanced. *These sentiments* I will make the subject of consideration. If I have imputed them to you without sufficient

reasons; while I shall regret my mistake, I shall not consider this circumstance as detracting at all from the utility or necessity of the discussion. Because, though you may disclaim the sentiments thus examined, the arguments you employ may lead some of your readers not only to suppose that you really entertain them, but also to adopt them as their own; and thus may prove the means of diffusing error. Accordingly, I shall make it my *chief object*, not to prove the sentiments examined to be *yours*, but whether yours or not, to prove them *incorrect*.

LETTER II.

Reverend and Dear Sir,

My present design is to remark particularly on some passages in your "Concio ad Clerum," delivered Sept. 10, 1828. The passages, to which my remarks will specially relate, are contained in the fourth reflection of the Sermon, together with the note, pp. 29—34.

[See the Appendix at the close of the Letters, where the passages are inserted at large. For the sake of convenient reference, I have marked the different paragraphs with the figures, 1, 2, 3, etc.]

Your reasoning in the place referred to is intended to obviate an objection against the character of God, arising from the fact, that he has given man a nature which he knew would lead him to sin. The position which you take in your reasoning I understand to be this; *that supposing God to have adopted a moral system, he could not have prevented all sin, nor the present degree of it;* or, as you sometimes represent it, *that God could not have done better on the whole, or better, if he gave existence at all, for any individual of the human race.* The conclusion is, *that no one can*

impeach the wisdom or goodness of God, considering, that notwithstanding the evil which exists, he will secure the greatest good possible for him to secure.

You say, the difficulties on this subject result in your view from "two very common, but groundless assumptions, — assumptions which, so long as they are admitted and reasoned upon, must," you think, "leave the subject involved in insuperable difficulties." The first of these assumptions is, "that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good, and as such, so far as it exists, is preferable to holiness in its stead." The second is, "that God could in a moral system have prevented all sin, or at least the present degree of it."

Now from all you have advanced on the subject, I conclude that you mean to hold the *opposite positions;* namely, that sin is *not* the necessary means of the greatest good, and as such, so far as it exists, is *not on the whole* preferable to holiness in its stead; and that, in a moral system, God could *not* have prevented all sin, nor the present degree of it.

I am aware that you do not in so many words directly *affirm* these opposite positions. I am aware also, that the Reviewers of Taylor and Harvey, while professedly vindicating your views on the subject, say, "we have no wish to establish the contrary assumption. We pretend not to assert what was or what was not possible with God. Our object has been to inquire whether men know as much respecting this subject as some have assumed to know." But whatever may have been the language of the Reviewers, I cannot think that this is the ground which you take in your sermon and note. It is no impossible supposition, that writers may, in a general expression or two, signify that they do not wish to establish a particular position; and yet may clearly show, by the whole current of their reasoning, that the establishment of that position is their favorite object. The reasons which lead me to think that you meant, indirectly indeed, but really and unhesitatingly, to maintain the two opposite positions above stated, I will now offer; though I should rejoice to learn, that your intention was not such as I have been led to suppose.

First. It is evident that you mean to *explode the two common positions* which you lay down at the beginning of your note. You call them "*groundless* assumptions;" and you think that, "so long as they are admitted, they *must* leave the subject involved in insuperable difficulties." Besides this, it is manifestly your object throughout the note, to *confute* the common positions, and even to make them appear weak and contemptible. Now all this does not seem like merely *doubting* these positions, and merely *inquiring* whether the grounds on which they rest are sufficient, without asserting anything one way or the other. I can hardly conceive how you could express your total rejection of them in a more unequivocal manner.

Secondly. As you *reject the common positions*, it is doubtless the case, that you *hold the opposite ones*. It would be unreasonable to suppose, that a man of your intellectual character had no opinion whatever on a subject which he had studied so much. And besides, there is no place where you can stand between rejecting what you call the common assumptions, and holding the opposite ones. For a man of decision, it will be no easy matter to deny the opinions commonly received, without embracing the opposite. Indeed what middle place can there be between *denying* that moral evil *is* on the whole for the best, and *holding* that it is *not* on the whole for the best? — between *denying* that it *is* the necessary means of the greatest good, and *holding* that it is *not* the necessary means? — between *denying* that God *had* power in a moral system to prevent sin, and *holding* that he had *not* power to do it? No man who thinks regularly and connectedly, can deny the one of these, without holding the other. I must therefore conclude, that just so far as you deny and reject the common positions above named, you maintain the opposite ones.

But I have another reason for this conclusion; which is, that the main tenor of your arguments throughout shows, that the support of the opposite positions is as much your object, as the rejection of the common ones. The chief considerations you offer have as much weight in favor of these opposite positions, as against the common ones. If they *disprove* the position, that sin *is* the

necessary means of the greatest good; they equally *prove*, that it is *not* the necessary means. There are indeed cases, in which a man may call in question the validity of the arguments which are used to support a particular proposition, and may be satisfied that they are wholly insufficient, without undertaking to defend, and even without believing, any proposition which is opposed to it. But they are cases quite different from the one now in hand. And when such is the state of a man's mind, he will so direct his reasoning as to make it appear; and will leave no room for others to think that, while he aims to confute the opinion which he calls groundless, it is equally his object to defend the opposite one.

It cannot surely be thought any objection against the construction which I have put upon your arguments, that they are expressed in the *interrogative* form. This form is not used in such a case to express doubt or indecision, but to give greater force to arguments. In your reasoning, you make a more frequent and more skilful use of interrogatives than is common. They occur continually; and are manifestly adapted to produce a high rhetorical effect. I do not complain of this. It is often the method of the inspired writers; and in ten thousand cases, it is the most brief, convincing, and impressive manner of stating our opinions, and our arguments. Whatever of reasoning you have introduced into your note, and into the part of your sermon connected with it, is made doubly vivid and striking, by being exhibited in this form. The fact then that you do not in so many words affirm anything, but merely make use of questions, is so far from implying that you do not wish to maintain the particular opinions which I have attributed to you, that it shows your determination to maintain them, and to inculcate them upon others, to the utmost of your power.

In my remarks, then, I shall consider myself as warranted to proceed on the supposition, that you hold these two opinions, namely; first; *that sin is not the necessary means of the greatest good, and as such, so far as it exists, is not, on the whole, preferable to holiness in its stead;* — second; *that in a moral system,*

God could not have prevented all sin, nor the present degree of it. And if you should, after all, say, that you do not mean either to defend or affirm these positions; though I might be gratified to know this, I should still wish to subject the positions themselves to a careful examination. On this last supposition, (which I have made that I might be sure not to do you any injustice,) *my object would be, not to charge these opinions upon you, but to inquire whether they are true. And then, though neither you nor your associates have ever embraced them, yet as some others may be exposed to them, the discussion may not be wholly inappropriate and useless.*

But for the present you will permit me to canvass the two opinions referred to, as though it was your intention to maintain them by the summary arguments contained in the passages quoted from your pamphlet. And in prosecuting my undertaking I shall labor to observe that excellent rule of the rhetoricians, *so to express ourselves, that we may not only be understood, but cannot be misunderstood.* I shall at least hope not to cast any additional obscurities over a subject which is in itself sufficiently obscure and difficult.

I shall begin with what I consider your second position. And as a proposition is generally true or false according as words or phrases are taken in one sense or another; I shall remark on the different senses of the words which relate to *power*, or the *want* of it; and shall then inquire in which of these senses the words appear to be used in your reasoning.

A distinction has commonly been made between the *literal* sense, and the *metaphorical* or *moral* sense of the words in question. This distinction is founded in the nature of things, and no man can deny it without involving himself in inconsistency. When I use the words in the *literal* or *proper* sense, and say, God has *power* to do a thing, or, he *can* do it; I mean that he is *able* or *competent* to do it, *if he chooses;* that there is in him no want of ability which will prevent his doing it, if on the whole he prefers and wills to do it; and I mean too, that if anything whatever which is the proper object of power, is not done, it is because God

does not choose to do it, or sees it best not to do it, — and not because he is destitute of the requisite *power*.

Thus we say, God has *power* to raise the dead, and to do it now. The word *power* is here used in the *literal*, *proper* sense. Accordingly, if the dead are not raised, and are not raised *now*, it is not because God is *unable* to raise them, or is less able now, than he will be at the last day; but solely because he does not see this to be best, and so does not choose it. If, when using words in the same literal sense, we should say, God *cannot* raise the dead; our meaning would be, that if he should, on the whole, see it to be *best*, and so should really *choose* and *will* to raise the dead; it would still fail of being done, and would fail because he had not sufficient *power*. It would be implied, that if he only had *power* enough, the thing would be done. We do not commonly speak of God as wanting power in this sense, as we believe him to be omnipotent. But we speak familiarly of the want of this power in man. If in any case he fails of accomplishing a particular thing, which he really *chooses* and *wills* to accomplish; we say, he is not *able*, — he has not sufficient *power*.

This I shall call the *first* sense of the words denoting the want of power, the *literal*, *proper* sense.

Let us now attend to the *metaphorical* or *moral* sense of the words denoting want of power. When in this sense we speak of intelligent beings as not *able* to do a thing, we mean that their *judgment* or *inclination prevents* them from doing it; that they have in their minds decisive reasons against doing it, or in favor of doing something else in its stead. Thus; God cannot lie; he cannot do an act of injustice. Here, that which prevents God from doing the thing spoken of, is the perfection of his own nature — his infinite wisdom and goodness, and not, properly speaking, the want of *power*. For an act of injustice may be done with as little *power*, as an act of justice. God had power, in the literal sense, to inflict evil upon Adam and Eve, and drive them out of Paradise, before they sinned, as really as after. What hindered him from doing it? Infinite wisdom, — holiness, — justice. And when we say, he was *unable* to do this act, we can mean nothing more than that he was *totally disinclined*.

But the words which denote *inability* or want of power, are sometimes used in a sense different from either of those above mentioned; as when it is said, that God *cannot* do what is *self-contradictory*, or *absurd*, or what is, from the very nature of the case, *impossible*. For example; he cannot cause a thing to be and not to be, at the same time, and in the same respect. Or, he cannot cause a part of a thing to be greater than the whole of it. The thing is, in its own nature, utterly *inconsistent*. And so it is a case in which power, either literal or metaphorical, either natural or moral, has nothing to do. A being who has neither power nor goodness, is, so to speak, just as *able* to do the thing proposed, as God is. And God, though possessed of infinite power and goodness, is just as *unable* to do it, as one wholly destitute of power and goodness. Such a thing, properly speaking, has no relation to power. It is not an object of power. And when we say, God *cannot* do it, we use the word *cannot* merely to signify, that it is utterly inconsistent and absurd to suppose such a thing.

I have thus endeavored to define the three senses of the phrase in question, not assuming to be perfectly right in my views of so abstruse a subject, but holding myself ready to be corrected by you, or by others.

The position which is now to be examined, and which I have understood you to maintain, is this; *that in a moral system God could not have prevented all sin, or the present degree of it.*

In what sense then do you speak of *the want of power* in God relative to this subject? There are several circumstances which seem to favor the idea that you speak of it in the *literal*, *proper* sense.

This might be naturally inferred from your question at your entrance on the subject. "Do you say then, God gave man a nature which he knew would lead him to sin? — What if he did? Do you know that God could have done better, better on the whole, or better, if he gave him existence at all, to the individual himself?" (See Appendix, I.) The argument, in plain terms, appears to be this; we have no reason to complain of God for

doing as he has done, because he *could not* have done better, either on the whole, or for any individual.* Now had you meant to speak of an inability in the second, or *moral* sense, I should suppose the argument would have stood thus: *You cannot properly complain of the present system, because it is the one which God saw to be best, and which his infinite wisdom and goodness led him to adopt.* Or thus; *You cannot complain of God for not adopting another system, because he saw that no other system was on the whole better than this, and of course he could not consistently with his infinite wisdom and goodness prefer any other.* To represent the subject thus, would be perfectly honorable to the character of God. He has done what infinite wisdom and benevolence dictated. He has not done differently, because infinite wisdom and benevolence did not permit, or did not lead to it. This is the common theory;—the theory adopted by orthodox ministers and Christians generally. But the language you employ makes quite a different impression. To say we have no reason to complain of God for what he has done, *because he could not have done better*, either on the whole, or for any individual, sounds too much like making an apology, and is very similar to what we often say in behalf of a weak, imperfect man, who is incompetent to the work he has undertaken, and, for want of power, fails of doing what he really wishes and endeavors to do. Any being surely ought to be excused, if he *means* right, and does all he *can*, though not all he would be glad to do. Now your language would seem to imply, that you intend to offer something like this as a justification of the conduct of God; and of course it would seem to imply that the *inability* ascribed to God was meant to be understood in the first, or *literal* sense. If this was not your meaning, and if you intended to advance nothing different from the common theory; then why should you deny the positions which exhibit that theory, and use language which would be likely to make an

* I shall everywhere understand the discussion to relate to a moral system as actually existing, or to exist, or to different forms of a moral system; and not to the question whether it would be better for God to create a moral system, or not to create,—a question scarcely worthy of a moment's consideration.

impression so different from your wishes. I hold, in common with others, that God would have forever excluded moral evil from the universe, if he had seen that such a measure would on the whole be most conducive to the object of his benevolence. But it would be very strange, and contrary to all good usage, to express this by saying, God *could not* prevent his creatures from sinning; — this is what he *wished* but was *unable* to accomplish. No one uses phraseology like this, except to denote the want of power in the *literal* sense.

But that the meaning which I have supposed may be fairly considered as implied in your remarks, will, I think, become still more evident, as we proceed in the examination of the passages which I have quoted from your pamphlet.

If then, sin is *not* the necessary means of the greatest good, and is not on the whole for the best; then it must follow that God does not *regard* it, or any degree of it, as on the whole for the best; and, of course, that he does not *choose* that it should exist. On the contrary, it must be his desire and choice to prevent its existence, and to exclude it forever from every part of the universe. According to the supposition, he has the best possible reasons for such a choice, and he could not be wise or good, if, all things considered, this were not his choice. Now any being, whether God or man, will accomplish what on the whole he chooses, if he is *able*. And if he is *unable*, it must be in the *literal*, *proper* sense. *Moral* inability is evidently precluded by the very statement of the case; for it is not the *wisdom* of God, nor his *benevolence*, nor his *will* or *choice*, which hinders him from shutting the door against sin, and producing universal holiness. According to the supposition, all his moral attributes must move him, with an infinite urgency, entirely to prevent the existence of sin. And when you say, he *could not* have prevented it, I should conclude your meaning must be, that he was *literally unable;* that he had such a want of power, as keeps an intelligent being from doing what he really, and on the whole, desires and chooses to do.

If you should say, you have expressly declared that you do not

mean to speak of God's inability to prevent sin in the *literal*, *proper* sense, and that such a declaration of yours ought to be received as satisfactory; to this I could only reply, — that the general current of your writings leaves a different impression on my mind; and that, as I know of no rule, which should lead me to gather your opinion from a single affirmation, rather than from the general aspect of what you have written; I have no alternative, but either to understand you to speak of God's inability to prevent sin in the literal sense, or else to believe that your language fails altogether of expressing your meaning, or that you had one meaning in your mind at one time, and a different one at another, — a mental fluctuation certainly not impossible in uninspired men, especially where the subject is complex.

As to the third sense of inability above spoken of, a single remark will be sufficient here. If we say in this sense, that God *cannot* do a thing, it is the same as to say, the thing is, in its own nature *absurd* and *impossible*. Such a thing is in no way the *object* of power. This I have already stated. I now add, that it is not, and cannot be, the object of *desire* or *choice*. Who can suppose that such a being as God, or any intelligent being, desires or chooses anything which he knows to be, in its very nature, inconsistent and impossible. And as several of your expressions clearly imply that you consider the exclusion of sin from the moral world as a thing which God on the whole *desired* and *preferred*, I see not how you can regard it as a thing wholly inconsistent and preposterous. But if it is your opinion that God did *not* on the whole desire and prefer the utter exclusion of sin from the moral system, but permitted, or willed its introduction, as on the whole for the best; then you agree with others; and if, with *this* view, you should say, God *could not* prevent all sin, or the present degree of it; you would use the word in the second, or *moral* sense, and the meaning would be, he could not do it consistently with his wisdom and goodness; or, his wisdom and goodness prevented him from doing it; or, which is the same thing, he did not see it to be best. And this is the common position.

APPENDEX TO THE PRESENT EDITION, A. D. 1850.

When, after the lapse of twenty years I review these letters, I find that I was chargeable with the want of due consideration in admitting that orthodox ministers generally maintain the exact position which Dr. Taylor imputes to them, namely, "that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good." I had, in fact, never been accustomed to express my belief in that manner; nor do I recollect any instance in which respectable Calvinists have employed that phraseology. I let it pass as the position of the orthodox, because it was so represented by Dr. Taylor. It was however an inadvertence in me; although I think the language will admit of a meaning to which Calvinists would not object. But if they do not generally employ that particular language, no one has a right to charge them with it. And if any one, instead of setting forth their opinion in their own language, should set it forth in other language, which would give him greater advantage in assailing it; they might justly complain of being treated with unfairness. The meaning which Dr. Taylor assigns to the phrase in question, is far from the faith of the orthodox. We do by no means hold it in his sense. For he considers the position, that "sin is the necessary means of the greatest good," as "equivalent to saying that sin is a good thing — even the best thing." We reject this idea with abhorrence. And if any man understands the position to imply this, he ought never to represent it as what the orthodox hold. They do not hold this or anything like it, but the contrary. Nor do they hold "that the present system of the universe was chosen *for the sake of the sin* which it contains," as though sin was really a good thing, and, *in itself considered*, the direct object of choice. The idea is shocking. God chose the present system of the universe not for the sake of the *evil*, but for the sake of the *good*, contained in it, or resulting from it. His object was to glorify himself, and to secure, on the whole, the largest measure of holiness and happiness, or the largest measure

of holy happiness. And he adopted the present system in preference to any other, because he knew it was, on the whole, better than any other, — not for the sake of the sin it contained, but because *the system itself*, with that small degree of sin and just suffering which it would contain, would on the whole, secure more glory to his perfections and more blessedness to his moral kingdom, than a system which should forever exclude sin and suffering. This I understand to be the common opinion. We hold that God could have excluded evil from his moral creation, if he had, all things considered, seen it to be best to exclude it. To the question, why he did not exclude sin and suffering altogether, we never give the answer, that he was unable to do it, or that a moral system without sin was from the very nature of things impossible. The answer which is most satisfactory to us, is, that he did not see it to be best to exclude it. And this answer is most satisfactory, because it expresses the greatest confidence in the wisdom, power and goodness of God.

The Scriptures set forth the principle under consideration in very plain, popular language. Joseph's brethren, with evil intent, committed a great sin, and sold him into Egypt. But God meant it for good ; that is, he meant to make it a means of good. Pharaoh's conduct was extremely wicked ; but God made it a means of great glory to his name. The wrath of man shall praise God, that is, shall be made a means of promoting his praise. "Our unrighteousness commends the righteousness of God," that is, it is by God's overruling providence, made subservient to this end. The same as to all sin. God means it for good. The promotion of good was the end he had in view in suffering it to take place, and it is the end which he actually accomplishes by means of it. And it is *necessary* in no other sense than this, that God judges it best to suffer it to take place, rather than to prevent it, for this purpose, that he may in his wise and sovereign providence, overrule it for the accomplishment of his benevolent object, the greatest good of this universe. In adopting the present system, rather than a system from which sin should be excluded, God acted under no *necessity*, but the dictate of his own infinite wisdom and good-

ness. He *must* act according to his own perfections. He *must* do right. And sin was necessary, I repeat it, only in this sense, that God saw it best to adopt a system which should include sin, the sin being wholly evil, hateful and pernicious in itself, but making a part, though a small part, of that great system of the universe, which, under God's wise and all-controlling providence, would on the whole, insure the greatest good. Sin, in the general sense, was no more necessary, than in every particular instance. Thus the crucifixion of Christ was a very heinous sin. But the only wise God saw fit to appoint it and to overrule it as the means, yea, the *necessary* means of salvation to sinners.

But, as the word *necessary*, in the case under consideration, is ambiguous, and is apt to embarrass the subject, I think it best to let the proposition stand without it, and to say, *sin is the means*, or *is made the means of the greatest good;* or thus: *Sin is altogether evil in its own nature and tendency, but God, in his mysterious providence, makes it a means of the greatest good*, or *overrules it for that purpose;* and *for that very purpose he suffered it to exist in his moral system.* Such is the representation which I am in the habit of making, and which I prefer to the one by which Dr. Taylor characterizes the common opinion of the orthodox.

The word *means* is, I think, used with propriety in this case. According to the best authorities, it signifies "that which is used in order to an end," or in order "to effect an object," — "the medium through which something is done." The word is properly employed in this sense, whatever may be the intrinsic nature, or direct tendency of the thing which is used as "the medium through which something is done." Accordingly, if God, on the whole, wills to let so evil a thing as sin exist, and so to counteract its natural aim and tendency as to make it contribute, though unwillingly, to a good end, it may properly be called a *means* of good. But it must be kept in mind, that it is never the only means, nor the *chief* means; but is only one of a *series* of means which divine providence employs to carry into effect its benevolent designs. According to God's wise and holy appointment, it is made to work in with other things of a different and opposite nature, for the

accomplishment of the greatest good. Now if God actually chose a moral system of this character rather than any other, as we know he did, he doubtless acted right.

The phraseology which I have here used is, I think, honorable to God, and conformable to his word. And when, in the way of accommodation, I use the position which Dr. Taylor imputes to the orthodox, I am far from using it and cannot be responsible for it in the sense which he affixes to it. Taken in that sense, it is as abhorrent to my feelings, as to his.

With the views of President Day, on this subject, and with his manner of expressing them, in his Inquiry on the Will, published in 1838, I entirely coincide. And I mention this with special pleasure, because Dr. Taylor has expressed his approbation of the same views.

Here it may be proper for me to say, that I republish these letters in their original form, with the exception of some slight changes in the language, or of a few omissions of sentences or parts of sentences, not in the least affecting any opinion or argument. I thus keep to the original form, because I suppose that any material departures from it would, in the circumstances of the case, be deemed exceptionable, and might be misconstrued.

LETTER III.

Reverend and Dear Sir,

I now proceed to examine the more particular representations you make on the subject already introduced. You inform your readers that the impossibility of God's preventing all sin, or the present degree of it, arises in your view, from *the nature of things*.

By the nature of things I have been accustomed to understand either the nature of God, or the nature of created beings, or both. I am unable to think of anything else which can be consistently intended by the phrase. I begin with the first of these.

The nature of God, taken in the moral sense, is the sum of his moral attributes. But some of your representations imply, that these attributes of God would lead him forever to prevent the existence of moral evil, if it were *possible* for him to do it. These attributes then, cannot be supposed to hinder him from preventing the existence of sin. If anything in his nature hinders, it must, according to your scheme, be the want of *power*, in distinction from his moral perfections; and this I should think must be the want of power in the *literal* sense.

I will next suppose, that by *the nature of things* you mean *the nature of created beings.*

Now all created beings are from God. He gave them their existence, their powers and faculties, — their *nature.* And it must be that he gave them such a nature as he chose to give. Here the question arises; — would God give his creatures such a nature, as would make it impossible for him to prevent that which he saw would *not* on the whole be for the best, and impossible to do what he saw would be for the best, and what he therefore chose to do? Can we believe that, by giving created beings such a nature, God has voluntarily put a hinderance in the way of his adopting and executing a plan, which he really considers as, on the whole, preferable to the one which he has adopted? If I do not mistake, you consider a moral system forever excluding sin, as the one which God on the whole decidedly preferred; and the present system, not excluding sin, as the one which God felt himself under the necessity of adopting, if he adopted any, — and felt himself under this necessity, *because* the nature he was about to give his creatures would be such, as to render it *impossible* for him to accomplish the plan which he really preferred. Whether such a view as this can be admitted, will be a subject of further consideration in the sequel.

Your reasoning from the case of the father and his sons, (See Ap-

pendix, 15) is, I think, altogether inconclusive. But it may help to explain more clearly the principles contained in your note. The analogy between God and a human father is indeed remarkably suited to illustrate and impress a variety of practical truths. But that it furnishes no foundation for an argument on the question at issue, is manifest from this circumstance, that the analogy is very imperfect, and must be subject to various limitations. It is as true in this case as in any other, that *God's ways are not our ways*. Your reasoning would be conclusive, were not the relation between God and his creatures different from that between a father and his children. But it is different; and different in regard to the very points on which a valid argument must be grounded. The *dependence* of creatures on God differs, both in its nature and degree, from the dependence of children on their father. The infinite God has a power over the circumstances, the conduct, and the character of all created beings as far above what any father has over the circumstances, conduct and character of his children, as the heavens are above the earth. Look now at the case you suppose. The father merely *knows* the propensities of his sons, the tendencies of their nature, and the circumstances of the condition designed for them. He *knows* these, but has no effectual power to *alter* them. Whereas, if the Bible be true, that Being, "who doeth all things after the counsel of his own will," can direct and control, just as he pleases, all the tendencies of our nature, all our propensities, and all the circumstances of our condition. The hearts of men are in his hand, and he turneth them whithersoever he will. "*He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy;*" that is, he *converts* and *saves whom he will;* and he would exert the same sanctifying influence upon others, if he willed it or saw it to be on the whole for the best. But the case of a father is very different. If he is affectionate and faithful, he does everything he *can* to make his children virtuous and happy; and if he does not make them so, it is merely for want of ability to do what he really wishes and endeavors to do; that is, for want of power in the literal sense; and his failure is always a source of heartfelt grief. Thus, in

regard to those very points which are most essential in the reasoning, the analogy between the two cases fails, and of course the argument grounded upon it fails; — fails as completely as the argument for universal salvation, which is grounded upon the same analogy.

In order to make this case answer your purpose, it must be implied that the inability which you attribute to God is an inability in the *literal, proper* sense. For if a father in such a case *could* alter the dispositions of his sons, or the state of the public Seminary to which he sends them, — if he had *power* to do this, he would do it. It is a grief to him that the propensities and circumstances of his beloved sons are not different; he earnestly wishes them to be different; but he cannot make them so. Now as your reasoning rests on the supposition, that there is, in this very respect, an analogy between the father here exhibited, and God, the Governor of the world; it must be implied, that God labors under the same kind of inability, or want of power, with this father. As I understand your reasoning in this case, I cannot but consider it as highly derogatory to the character of God.

But as you rely so much on the argument derived from the case of the father and his sons, and as the subject is so important; I shall express my reflections upon it in another form, and even more particularly than might seem suitable in this place, — choosing rather to be chargeable with some repetition, as well as digression, than to omit anything which might tend to illustrate the truth.

It was the opinion of the Pelagians, and it seems to be the opinion of some who hold the general principles of orthodoxy at the present day, that God has no influence over the human mind, except merely in the way of *moral suasion*, often called *moral influence;* by which I understand the influence of *rational considerations* presented to the mind. This opinion has been opposed by the ablest evangelical writers from the Reformation to the present age, and is, in my view, wide of the truth. So far as I can judge, the opinion has arisen from the supposition of an analogy which does not exist, between *human* power, and *divine* power;

—between the influence of *man*, and the influence of *God*. This mistaken supposition may easily be accounted for. It is a matter of experience, that *we* can have no influence over the minds of our fellow men, either in the way of convincing or persuading them, except by presenting considerations to their minds. From this some men have concluded, that it must be so with *God*. But in this conclusion, they have overlooked the most striking peculiarity of that influence which the Scriptures ascribe to the Supreme Being. I think it may be proved from Scripture and from facts, that the analogy above supposed does not exist. Indeed the thing becomes obvious on a moment's reflection. God is the CREATOR of the mind. "He made us, and not we ourselves." And he has so constituted us, that we can have access to the minds of our fellow men in no other way, than by the use of words, and other sensible signs. But does it follow from this, that it must be so with GOD? As well might we say that, because we cannot create a mind, therefore God cannot. He on whom the mind depends for its existence and all its faculties, must have access to it at all times, and if he pleases, without any use of those means to which *we* are confined. In how many instances has God, without any instrumentality whatever, caused men to know at once, what they could never have learnt by natural means! The cases I refer to are indeed miraculous. But they are none the less adapted to prove, that *God can act directly on the mind*, and that his influence over it is not subject to the limitations and imperfections, by which our influence is circumscribed. And as we see that even the most uncommon and miraculous operations of divine power in the human mind are consistent with its nature, and its relations to God; we surely cannot doubt that this is the case with that influence, which renews the heart, and without which no one can be saved. All the power we possess over sinners, consists in the exhibition we make to them of divine truth. And both Scripture and experience teach, that we should always use this power in vain, were it not for a power distinct from ours, and altogether superior to it. When we have, in different ways, presented the truth to the minds of sinners for their consideration, we have

done what is in our power; and if the thing stops there, they will continue to be dead in sin, and enemies to the truth. Now when God finds them in this very state, looking at the truth, but hating it, he can give them a heart to love it; and can do this instantly, all external circumstances remaining the same as before. So God promises *to take away the heart of stone and give a heart of flesh. We* cannot promise this. Or if we should promise it, we could not perform it. Believers are born of God; not of man; — "not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man;" — "not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth." But God, "of his own will, begat us." As a cause of this spiritual change, man's power is excluded, and God's power stands alone. When the Apostle says to some believers, "I have begotten you through the gospel," he does indeed attribute to himself an agency in their conversion; but it must be understood as merely an *instrumental* agency, the success and the exercise of which depended wholly on God. The Apostle takes special pains to assert this. "Neither is he that planteth anything, nor he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." Had not God a power over the heart exceedingly different from what we possess, no sinner could ever be regenerated. To *renew the heart*, is quite another thing than presenting motives. Man can do this. But that is the work of omnipotence. The power which first created the soul, and that which new creates it, is the same, and is equally distant from man's power.

I have dwelt so long on this point, because I apprehend that those, who think the power of God over moral agents limited, ground their opinion on a supposed analogy, which does not exist, between the manner and extent of divine influence, and human influence. If the supposition of such an analogy is given up, as I am sure it must be; then the case of the father and his sons, stated in your note, fails of answering the purpose for which you produce it. That your reasoning from the case may be valid, you must make it appear, that the power of God over the heart is of the same nature, and subject to the same limitations, with the

power which a father has over the feelings and conduct of his sons, even while they are absent from him.

Leighton, who stands among the best of uninspired writers, has some passages in his Expository Lectures on the first Epistle of Peter, which are so appropriate to the present subject, that I shall take the liberty to quote them.

"To contest much, how in this regeneration, God works upon the will, and renews it, is to little purpose, provided this be granted, that *it is in his power to regenerate and renew a man at pleasure.* And how is it possible not to grant this, unless we will run into that error to think, that God hath made a creature too hard for himself to rule, or hath willingly exempted it? And shall the works of the Almighty, especially this work, wherein most of all he glories, fail in his hand? . . . . . No: no sinner so dead, but there is virtue in his hand to revive him. . . . . If his sovereign will be not a sufficient principle of this regeneration, why then says the Apostle James, *of his own will begat he us?*"

He says, the word is the means of effectual calling, "when the Spirit that speaks in the word, *works in the heart*, and *causes* it to hear and obey." — "The word *calls*, but the Spirit *draws*." — "The strongest rhetoric, the most moving and persuasive way of discourse, is all too weak; the tongue of men and angels cannot prevail with the soul to free itself, and shake off all that detains it. Although it be convinced of the truth of those things which are represented to it; yet still it can and will hold out against it." — "Only the Father of spirits hath absolute command of the souls of men, to work on them as he pleaseth, and where he will. This powerful, sanctifying Spirit knows no resistance; works sweetly, yet strongly. It can come into the heart; whereas all other speakers are found to stand without. The still voice within persuades more than all the loud crying without." — "There is a secret but very powerful virtue in a word, or look, or touch, of this Spirit upon the soul, by which it is forced, not with a harsh but a pleasing violence, and cannot choose but follow it."

I have thought it proper thus far to inquire whether *the nature of things* can be supposed to *limit the power of God*, as you represent, so that he *could not* prevent all sin, or the present degree of it. But I have by no means intended to overlook the more specific view which you exhibit in regard to the subject before us. To this I shall now particularly attend.

Your position is, that the power of God is limited by *the nature of moral agency;* that *such is the nature of free agency, that he could not wholly prevent its perversion.*

Of course you would not expect us to admit this without evidence. It is always proper for us to inquire for the proof of what is asserted; especially in cases in which the salvation of souls is concerned. If either from the nature of moral agency, or a deficiency of power in God, the hearts of men are not in his hand, and he cannot make them what he wills them to be; then evidently they depend for salvation not upon *him*, but upon *themselves;* — a precarious dependence indeed!

In the Review of Taylor and Harvey in the Christian Spectator for 1829, p. 379, it is said; "So far is Dr. Taylor from opening a new career of rash and fruitless speculation, that his object is to recall past speculations to greater truth and soberness." Again, p. 384, the Reviewers, who seem everywhere to take pleasure in showing that they are united as parties and associates with you in this controversy, say; "We pretend not to assert, on this subject, what *was*, or was *not* possible with God. Our object has been to inquire whether men know as much respecting it, as some have assumed to know." Now my impression has been widely different from this. It has seemed to me that on this subject, you and those agreeing with you, instead of being, as the Reviewers think, less presuming, less forward to *assert* and *decide*, than orthodox ministers and writers generally, have gone far beyond them. The orthodox generally regard the existence of sin under the divine government, as a profound mystery. They resolve it into the unsearchable wisdom of God; and pretend not to be able to obviate the difficulties which attend the subject, in any other way than by saying, that the incomprehensible God, for reasons which

lie beyond human intelligence, taking a perfect view of his own attributes, and of the whole system of created beings, saw it to be best not to prevent the existence of moral evil; that in his inscrutable counsels he chose to admit it into the universe; that in ways known only to himself, and by a power which he only possesses, he will make it the means of glory to his name, and good to his kingdom; — that when he converts some sinners, and leaves others in impenitence, he acts according to his own *sovereign will*, — implying that the reasons for this conduct, which he has in his own mind, and which are perfectly satisfactory to his infinite wisdom, he has not made known to us, nor made us, in our present state, capable of discovering; — so that we can only bow down in humble submission and adoration, and say, *Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.*

When we say, God saw the existence of moral evil to be on the whole for the best; we say it, because we believe that all things depend ultimately on his will, and because we are confident, that the system which he has seen fit to adopt, must be wise and benevolent. If we consider sin as the means of promoting the glory of God's character, and the good of his kingdom; it is because we learn from his word and providence, that he uses it as such. Thus we resolve it all into the infinite perfection and the holy government of that Being, *of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things;* and the positions we maintain result directly from our implicit confidence in him. We should naturally be inclined to think, that God would prevent the existence of sin; but he has not done it. Now we content ourselves with saying, he has not done it, because in his unsearchable wisdom he judged it best not to do it. This I consider to be the modest, sober theory of the orthodox. But you undertake to assign the *specific reason* why God has not prevented the existence of sin. You are not satisfied with saying, he did what he saw on the whole to be for the best — he did not exclude moral evil, because he judged it best not to exclude it — he chose and adopted the present system, which includes sin, because, all things considered, he regarded it as best adapted to promote the glory of his perfections,

and the sum of created happiness. You are not satisfied with this view. But you undertake to go to the bottom of the subject, and to show particularly *why* God did not prevent the existence or the present degree of sin. You hold, that he did not do it, because he *could* not; that if he created a system of moral beings at all, it must be a system in which moral evil should exist. You hold, that there were *only two* things which a God of infinite wisdom and power *could* do; that there was no possibility of his taking any course, except one of these, — either not to create a moral system, or to create one which should include sin; that he had no election between different systems, but only between this system and no system. You hold that such is the nature of moral agency, that it was utterly impossible for God to prevent its perversion; that if moral beings existed, it was unavoidable that some of them should sin; and that omnipotence itself could not exert an influence upon them sufficient to prevent this. Let God create moral beings in any way he pleases; let him place them in the most favorable circumstances, exert upon them the highest possible influence, and extend over them the most constant and most powerful protection; let him watch them with his omniscient eye, and shield them with his omnipotent arm; still, according to your theory, they will, at least some of them, fall into sin. You think there is, in moral agency itself, a power so resistless, that it is impossible for God himself, however strong may be his desire, to prevent the existence, or even the present degree of sin.

I have thus given a somewhat dilated view of what I understand to be your theory, in distinction from the common theory. And if I have understood you right, I think it must appear, that you have gone beyond the limits of sober judgment. You have undertaken to determine that God had no choice, and could have no choice, between different moral systems of different degrees of excellence, and that there was nothing for his wisdom to consider, but the single question, whether he should have a system including sin, or no moral system at all. Instead of leaving the reason why God chose the present system, as an inscrutable mystery, you have boldly undertaken to remove at once all the difficulty,

and all the mystery attending the subject, and to assign the particular and only reason of the divine choice. So that, whatever may be the opinion of the Reviewers, it is evident that you do not hesitate at all "to assert what *was* or was *not* possible with God."

Your readers, I think, cannot avoid the impression that such as I have described is the ground you take. And the whole aspect of your note, the interest you manifest, your illustrations, your forcible and rhetorical interrogations, — all convey the idea, that the theory you exhibit is a favorite one with you, and that the views you express are the settled convictions of your own mind.

Respecting this particular theory, I have several things to offer.

Now it seems to me, that you *have not supported the theory by any valid proof*, and that the reason you give why God has not prevented the existence of sin, is *no reason at all*. What there is in moral beings, which renders it impossible for God to preserve them in a state of holiness, or what there is in the very nature of moral agency which puts it out of the power of God to influence and control its operations, you have not shown. In a word, I see not that you have done more than to introduce an unsupported hypothesis. If you say, it is not your object to maintain this theory, but only to suggest that it *may* be true; then how shall we account for the decided tone with which you reject the common theory? And how shall we account for it, that you manifest such confidence in this theory, as one which relieves all your difficulties? Who was ever relieved of his difficulties on any subject, by means of a theory which he did not believe?

But before I enter on a particular examination of your reasoning, I must say one thing more, namely; that the peculiar theory which I understand you to maintain, seems to imply that moral agents, as such, — that is, moral beings in the exercise of their moral agency, are *not dependent on God*. To say, that moral agents, as such, are *dependent* on God, is, according to the common understanding, the same as to say, that it depends on

God's will, whether their moral agency shall be exercised in one way or another. It implies, that he has power over their moral faculties, and can excite or influence them to act right, if he chooses; that he can, if he pleases, make them holy, and keep them holy. On the other hand, to say, that moral agents, as such, are *not dependent on God*, is only saying, that it does not ultimately depend on God what their moral actions shall be; that they are not so under his control that he can influence them, as moral agents, to feel and act right, when he pleases; and that it would be destructive of their moral agency, if he should thus influence them. Thus I apprehend that the *real independence of man, in regard to his moral actions*, will be found to be necessarily implied in your scheme of thought. I know not how far you may avow this sentiment. But I will take the liberty to say, that I could not adopt your language, or the theory which in my view it evidently implies, without denying what the Bible everywhere teaches, what all Christians practically believe, and what enlightened philosophy has always admitted, — the doctrine that man is entirely dependent on God, — dependent particularly as to his moral character and actions.

I now proceed more particularly to inquire into the truth of your position, that *the nature of moral agency limits the power of God, and renders it impossible for him to prevent the existence or the present degree of sin.*

To assert that a thing is impossible is quite different from proving it to be so. Many have asserted that it is impossible for God to *create;* but they have not proved it. We believe the opposite; and for the support of our belief, we refer to the fact, that God has created. As to the position, that the nature of moral agency renders it impossible for God to prevent all sin, or the present degree of it; I maintain that the nature of moral agency occasions no such impossibility; that moral agents are in a state of perfect dependence on God; that he has power to make them holy, and to preserve them holy, just as far as he chooses; and that, when he does not make or preserve them holy, he is not hindered by want of power; that he is not prevented by any uncon-

trollable necessity, nor by anything too hard for him in the nature of moral agency; but that, while he acts with a power to which nothing can present an obstacle, he has suffered his creatures to fall into sin, and suffers many of them to continue in sin, for reasons which exist in his own infinite mind, but which are beyond the reach of human intelligence.

Now what is meant by the phrase, a thing is impossible *in its own nature*, or *its nature is such* as to make it an impossibility? By this I understand what was pointed out as the third sense of the words, *inability*, *cannot*, etc. It is a case where to suppose the thing done is a contradiction, or an absurdity. Thus, that a part of a thing should be greater than the whole, or the whole smaller than a part; or that a thing should be and not be at the same time; or that an effect should be produced without a cause; or that sin should be holiness, or holiness sin; or that there should be bounds to what is strictly infinite,—is *in itself* an *impossibility*. To suppose such a thing would be preposterous. In regard to every case of this sort, the impossibility or absurdity is perfectly manifest to all who understand the terms employed. No proof is wanted; because nothing can be more certain. It is true also, in regard to things of this kind, that the impossibility exists *universally*. It is not the fact, that while the thing is impossible in some instances, it is not in others. It is equally impossible in all instances. To suppose the thing in all cases, is self-contradictory and absurd.

Now if you affirm that *the very nature of moral agency* renders it impossible for God to influence moral agents in such a manner as to preserve them from sin; you must, I should think, affirm it to be so universally, and in every instance. If, as you hold, the very *nature of moral agency* is such that God cannot prevent its perversion, that is, cannot prevent the commission of sin; then this must be the case in every instance in which moral agency exists. So that we must say in regard to this and that individual, and to every individual among moral beings, it is impossible for God to preserve *him* from sin. If, as you think, this impossibility arises from the *very nature of moral agency;* then, if any

individual being has moral agency, the impossibility of course relates to him. If you had supposed that this impossibility arises from any particular circumstances; then you might consistently say that, as these circumstances vary in regard to different individuals, it may be possible for God to prevent sin in some instances, though not in others. But as you seem to make the impossibility to consist entirely in the *nature of moral agency*, the impossibility must be the same wherever moral agency exists. But according to the Reviewers before mentioned, your scheme of doctrine, as well as the common one, implies, that in a moral system God could have prevented each sin individually considered. Now all the sins in the universe are *individual sins*. There is no such thing as *general* sin, except what is made up of particular, individual sins. If, then, as your system is said by the Reviewers to imply, God could have prevented each individual sin, or "each sin individually considered;" then I should suppose he could have prevented all sins. For if *each* sin, individually considered, was prevented, what sin could there be which was not prevented? But to prevent each sin, is the same as to prevent each agent from sinning. As therefore, according to what your system supposes in the judgment of the Reviewers, God could have prevented each sin individually considered, he could have prevented each moral agent individually considered, from sinning, — these being one and the same thing. Thus the same Reviewers allow that "God might doubtless have prevented the access of the tempter to our first parents, or have unveiled his true character, or by a divine influence have prevented their yielding to his insinuations," p. 381. And yet, what must appear not a little strange, you seem to think there is that in each individual moral agent, which renders it impossible for God to prevent his sinning; and this ground of impossibility you have said, is *the very nature of moral agency;* which of course belongs to every moral agent. And I would have it remembered, that this ground of impossibility belongs *equally* to all moral agents; — belongs to one as much as to another; and to each moral agent as much as to a moral world. It exists as *perfectly* in each, individually considered, as in all,

collectively considered; and relates as much to "each sin individually considered," as to all sins considered collectively. So that I see not how to avoid the conclusion, that if, from the very nature of moral agency, it was impossible for God to prevent sin in the moral world, it was impossible for him to prevent it in any instance whatever; and to speak of God as actually preventing sin, would be inconsistent. The same as to the conversion and salvation of sinners. You hold that the nature of moral agency makes it impossible for God to convert all sinners. The nature of moral agency you consider to be the only obstacle in the way. Be it so. This insurmountable obstacle exists in relation to each and all alike. So that if there is reason to assert in regard to any sinners, (say those who will continue impenitent,) that God cannot convert them; there is the same reason to assert it in regard to all others. The impossibility relates to every sinner on earth. And to speak of God's actually converting *any*, would be to speak of that which, in the nature of things, is impossible.

But perhaps, after all, you will not adhere to the idea, that the nature of moral agency is the *sole* ground of the impossibility which you affirm. You may suppose, as your reasoning in some places seems to imply, that in order to prevent sin, or to convert sinners, in particular cases, God must have the advantage of motives possessing a certain degree of power; and that, in some circumstances, God must have motives of greater power, than in others. You often refer to a particular kind of motives as having an influence, without which God could not preserve moral agents holy. And probably you will maintain the opinion, which I shall bring particularly under examination by and by, — that God may preserve moral beings in a state of holiness for a time, by means of less powerful motives than he will find necessary in order to preserve them afterwards.

According to this view of the subject, the nature of moral agency is not the only thing, which operates to render it impossible for God to prevent moral beings from sinning; but besides this, there is the hinderance which arises from the want of sufficient motives, or from the occurrence of temptations. And so, if this

be indeed your belief, the whole of your system on this point would, I apprehend, require to be stated thus. 'Such is the nature of moral agency, and such are the circumstances of *some* moral agents, that God cannot prevent their sinning. But, though the nature of moral agency remains the same; the circumstances of *other* moral agents are such, — in other words, such are the means which God has to influence them, that he is able to preserve them from sin; — as he preserved the angels who kept their first estate.' According to this, the difference of God's influence over some moral agents from what it is over others, is really owing to the *difference of circumstances.* But then, to what is this *difference of circumstances* owing? Could God have ordered circumstances in another manner? Could he have placed those who sinned in such circumstances, as would have made it possible for him to prevent them from sinning? If he could; then, after all, it was in his power to prevent. If he could not; then his power is limited in this respect, as well as the other; so that he is not almighty in his providence; and when we say, that God has a perfect control over all the circumstances of his creatures, we say more than the truth.*

I maintain that in all the circumstances in which moral agents exist, God has power to make and preserve them holy; that if the motives to holiness which are set before them are sufficient to put them under obligations to be holy; God is able, by those motives, to influence them to holiness. The power of God to

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* The following passage from Fenelon happily expresses the general views of evangelical Christians upon this subject.

"We should be so far from dishonorably seeking for the cause of the volitions of God in his foreknowledge of future conditional events, on the different plans which he had sketched for his work, that, on the contrary, we should look for the cause of these events, and of the very foreknowledge which he has of them, *in his will alone*, which is the sole reason of everything — No, my God, thou hast not consulted many plans, to which thou wast constrained to subject thyself. For what could constrain thee? Thou dost not prefer one thing to another, because thou foreseest that it *must be;* on the contrary, it cannot be, unless thou willest it so to be. Thy choice does not servilely follow on, after that which must happen; but it is thy sovereign, almighty, productive choice, which makes everything to be what thou ordainest."

make men holy, does not, in my view, necessarily depend on the external circumstances in which they are placed, or on the variety or comparative strength of the external motives presented before their minds. And to prove this, I refer to what God has actually done. Under the former dispensation, the circumstances of men were comparatively unfavorable; and the external motives which urged them to holiness much less various and powerful, than under the gospel dispensation. Fewer truths were revealed, and those which were revealed, were revealed less clearly, and understood less perfectly. And yet in those unfavorable circumstances, God converted many sinners. He made men holy in some instances, where their outward condition seemed to cut off all prospect of their salvation. It is a thought which I love to cherish, that when men are left destitute of the advantages of the word of God, and when only those few truths, which are obscurely made known by the light of nature or by a traditionary revelation, are within their reach; still God can save them, and, in some instances, actually does save them, by means of those few truths, no less than by means of those higher truths contained in the Christian Scriptures. Several passages in the Bible evidently imply this. Now if God does in fact convert sinners in those less favorable circumstances; he certainly *can* do it. And if he *can* do it; then neither the nature of moral agency, nor the want of more powerful motives, nor both united, constitute any such impossibility as you speak of. And if they constitute no impossibility in these cases, they cannot be supposed to do it in other similar cases. And so, after all, notwithstanding the moral agency of sinners, and notwithstanding any unfavorable circumstances which may attend them, God has power to convert as many of them as he pleases. Even in a state where but little light shines, and but few truths are understood, *God can have mercy on whom he will have mercy*, just as he can under the clear light of the gospel.

Perhaps it may be thought that certain representations in the Bible are at variance with these views. Christ said, if the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon had enjoyed the advantages which the inhabitants of Judea enjoyed, they would have repented; implying

that better means, — that more powerful exhibitions of truth were necessary, — and would have been effectual where inferior means failed. I allow that Christ said what implied this; and that the *common* method of God's gracious administration confirms the same view. And so our conclusion must be, that God has determined to convert sinners *most frequently* where the best means are enjoyed. But can we infer from this, that God was not *able* to proceed in a different way, and to convert as many sinners where there were but few advantages, as where there were many? Not at all. Christ does not say, that God had not *power* to convert sinners in Tyre and Sidon without those better means of which he spake; but only declares the fact, that if they had enjoyed those better means, they would have repented. Now we must conclude, that the method which God in the exercise of his mercy *generally* pursues, is the one which he sees to be wisest and best; — but not that he was *unable* to pursue a different method.

But let us see how it is now under the gospel dispensation, and in a Christian land. Here there are means and motives in abundance. So far as the influence of means and motives is necessary to the success of what God undertakes, there is surely no deficiency here. In these circumstances, there can be no want of what some call "*moral power*" in God. How much soever his "*moral power*" may fall short in other circumstances; here certainly he has sufficient. And so it must be true, that, in these circumstances, and armed with this high "*moral power*," he *can* convert sinners. He certainly does convert some. This proves that he *can* convert some, and that *the nature of their moral agency* does not make it impossible. Now why has not God the same power to convert others? Their moral agency is the same thing; their circumstances are substantially the same; God's power is the same; even his "*moral power*" is the same. Now if you say that, although God *can* convert some, (namely, those that he does convert,) he *cannot* convert others; I ask, what hinders? What renders it impossible? Is it the nature of moral agency? But that is the same in all. Is it the want of means and motives? There is no such want here. Is it the want of "*moral*

power?" We have seen that in such circumstances, this cannot be. What then is the hinderance? If you allow that God has power to convert other sinners, as well as those whom he does convert, and that his not doing it is, as the Bible represents, owing to his sovereign *will*, and not to any supposed impossibility in the nature of things; then we have no more controversy on this point.

Let me say here, what has already been intimated, that many facts mentioned in Scripture, such as the conversion of Abraham, and the piety of a great multitude of his posterity, and some of them in times of gross darkness, and the piety too of a considerable number among the gentile nations, where the light of truth shone very dimly, and a series of similar facts in modern times, clearly show, that the renewal of the hearts of men has no necessary dependence on the degree of light which they enjoy, or on the number or strength of the external motives presented to their minds; but that it depends ultimately on the *will of God.*

I pray you, Brother, to inquire, whether your scheme of thought does not tend towards a denial of all divine power and divine influence in the conversion of sinners, except merely such a kind of power and influence as we have over the minds of our fellow men. And would not such a denial stand in direct opposition to the declarations of Scripture? If I do not entirely misunderstand the word of God, he claims a power which is peculiar to himself; — which entirely distinguishes the Creator from his creatures, — a power which is infinite, and which extends to all the faculties and acts of the human mind and heart, as well as to outward circumstances; and this power of God over the intellectual, and especially over the moral acts of men, and over everything which goes to constitute their character, is, in its operations, subject to no restrictions, except from the dictates of his holy will; and it is directed and regulated wholly and exclusively by his unerring wisdom. The opinion, by whomsoever advanced, that because *we* can have no direct access to the hearts of our fellow men, and no influence over them except merely by presenting

motives to their view, therefore *God* cannot, I consider to be an error of the most dangerous tendency. And although that peculiar, efficacious power, which God claims and exercises directly over the inmost soul of every one whom he converts, creating the heart anew, and influencing every thought and affection as his infinite wisdom dictates, — although this direct and perfect power over the heart, which God claims as one of his prerogatives, is at the present day often but very erroneously called *physical* power; still it is none the less a reality for being *misnamed*, and none the less important to the glory of God and the salvation of men.

One thought more. If God is unable to direct and control moral agency, as he pleases; it plainly follows that he is unable to direct and control those events which depend upon it, or are involved in it. Nothing is more evident, than that the general course of events in the moral and civil world are inseparably connected with the dispositions and characters of men, and result from them. To assert, then, that God cannot govern the dispositions and form the characters of men according to his will, is to assert, that he cannot order *events* according to his will. And it will be easy for any one to perceive, that to assert this, is to set aside the truth of the Bible.

LETTER IV.

Reverend and Dear Sir,

It is due to you, that I should attend still more particularly to the reasoning you have introduced on the subject under consideration.

The question before us is, whether the entire prevention of sin in moral beings, or the prevention of the present degree of it, is

possible to God in *the nature of things;* or, whether God was able to prevent the existence of sin, or the present degree of it, *without destroying man's moral agency.*

In your reasoning on the subject, you refer to two sources of evidence; the *nature of the subject*, and *facts.*

You say, "the prevention of sin by any influence which destroys the *power* to sin, destroys moral agency. Moral agents must therefore possess the *power* to sin." And then you ask; "who can prove a priori, or from the nature of the subject, that a being who *can* sin, will not sin?" And I ask, who can prove that such a being *will* sin? You ask; "How can it be proved a priori, or from the nature of the subject, that a thing will *not* be, when for aught that appears, it *may* be?" And I ask as to the same thing, — how it can be proved that it *will* be, when for aught that appears it may *not* be? The bare possibility of a thing is no proof at all, either that it *will* be, or will *not* be.

But the question seems to be a favorite one with you; and perhaps this reply does not exactly meet the design of it. I will therefore consider it further. You ask with emphasis; "who can prove a priori, or from the nature of the subject, that a being who *can* sin, will *not* sin?" Now, according to your manner of using words, I suppose you would say of the supreme Being, that he *can* sin. You certainly consider him to be a moral agent; and you consider the power to sin as necessarily belonging to moral agency, so that there can be no moral agent without it. According to the principles then which you adopt, here is an instance in which it can be proved with perfect clearness, that a being who *can* sin, will *not* sin, — and proved too from the nature of the subject, that is, from the nature of the Being referred to. It results with absolute certainty from the nature of God, that he will *not* sin; though in your sense of the word, he has *power* to sin.

But probably you would confine your remarks on this point to *created* moral agents. Be it so. You doubtless hold that *Satan* is a moral agent, and of course that he has *power* to love God. But may it not be certainly proved, from his very nature, I mean his *moral* nature as it now is, that he will *not* love God?

Whether a thing which is *possible*, will actually take place or not, depends, I have said, not on the mere *possibility* of it, but on other considerations. There are appropriate causes of action. In other words, there are things within and without a moral agent, which prove excitements to action, and to action of a particular kind. These causes, or excitements are in some cases such, that the moral agent will do *right;* and in other cases such, that he will do *wrong*. The causes which act in or upon a holy angel are such, that he certainly will act in a holy manner. The causes, or influences, human and divine, under which a regenerate man acts, are such that, as you and I believe, he certainly will persevere in holiness. The causes or influences, under which an unregenerate man acts, are such, that so long as he continues in a state of unregeneracy, he certainly will sin. A moral agent's acting right or wrong, is an effect, depending, not on the bare possession of *power*, (which can never account for his acting in one way rather than another,) but on those peculiar causes, whether external or internal, which are adapted to influence him to act in this or that particular manner. And it is very obvious in itself, and a matter of common experience, that just so far as we have power over the causes under which a moral being acts, we can influence him to act right or wrong, as we please. The only thing which limits our influence in this respect is, that we have only a limited or partial power over the causes of action.

Here we find one of the great points of difference between God and man. We are taught both by reason and Scripture, that God has a perfect, unlimited power over all the springs and occasions of action in human beings, — over everything which has the nature of a motive or excitement to action; and especially over the disposition of the heart. This appears to me so clear and certain, that I should no more expect that any man would deny it, than that he would deny the principle of gravitation, or even the divine existence. Now as God has such power over the dispositions, hearts, and circumstances of men, — over all that moves to action; he can influence them as he will, and can determine in every

instance, what their moral affections and actions shall be. If in any instance he cannot influence them to act as he pleases, it must be because there are some causes or occasions of action over which he has not a perfect power. You will understand of course that I refer not to causes of a physical nature, which indeed have no relation to the subject, except as they come into contact with moral causes, and through them, excite moral affections, and lead to moral actions.

If then it is, as I have endeavored to show, that God is the cause of all causes; if he has a perfect power over everything within and without the mind, which can prove an excitement to moral action, and consequently over moral action itself; there would seem to be no great difficulty in answering the following question of yours (Appendix, 13); "Had God prevented the sins of one human being to the present time, or had he brought to repentance one sinner more than he has; who can prove that the requisite interposition for the purpose would not result in a vast increase of sin in the system, including even the apostasy and the augmented guilt of that individual?" I answer: The apostasy of the sinless man, or of the penitent, here supposed, could be very easily prevented, if God pleased, by his continuing so to direct the causes of action, that holy conduct should be the result. As he can make a moral agent holy at one time as well as at another, — to-morrow as well as to-day; so doubtless he can ensure his holiness for a longer, as well as for a shorter time, — forever, as well as for a single moment. While he continues to be God, he can accomplish whatever he pleases. Instead then of requiring proof, that apostasy and increased guilt would not result from God's interposition in converting moral agents, or in preserving them holy, and that his own work would not thus fail in his hands; would it not rather be incumbent on you to show reasons for an apprehension so derogatory to his infinite perfections?

You say, (Appendix, 13,) "Facts, so far as they are known to us, furnish no support to the assumption that God could in a moral system prevent sin, or the present degree of it. For we know of

no creature of God, whose holiness is secured without that influence which results, either directly or indirectly, from the existence of sin and its punishment. How then can it be shown from facts, that God could secure any of his moral creatures in holiness without this influence; or to what purpose is it to allege instances of the prevention of sin under this influence, to prove that God could prevent it without this influence ? "

On this subject, I appeal to *fact*, as well as you. The important fact I refer to, is the case of moral agents before the first apostasy in heaven. They then existed in a state, in which there was *no* sin, and no punishment of sin, and in which, of course, they could be brought under no influence arising from such punishment. They were moral agents then, as much as afterwards; and their being so implied that they acted under the influence of motives. The motive arising from the existence and punishment of sin, was wanting. But, without this, there were effectual motives to holiness. It is not fear of punishment, that can be supposed to prompt new created seraphs to love that Being from whose infinite goodness they have just received their existence. In their own holy hearts, and in the holy character of their God, they find all the inducements they need to gratitude, love, and praise. Neither "directly nor indirectly" can the existence and punishment of sin be necessary to inspire their purest devotions. And surely he who gave them their holy nature, and placed them in those favorable circumstances, could so influence that nature, and so control those circumstances, that they would continue to love and obey him for the same reasons, as they did at first. It is a fact, that he did, for a time preserve them from sin, without any influence derived from the existence and punishment of sin. He preserved them by giving efficacy to the existing motives to holiness, and by rendering any temptations to sin abortive and powerless, — that is, he so influenced *their minds*, that they complied with the one, and rejected the other: — for, in my view, the divine influence, in every such case, acts upon the *mind itself;* in other words, upon *man considered as an intelligent, moral being*, and not upon any object distinct from the mind, and presented

before it is an inducement to action. Such is my deliberate view of the subject, though I wish not here to make it a matter of discussion.

But I propose a further examination of your argument from *fact*. The argument, as we have seen, is substantially this: As God has not, so far as we know, actually secured the holiness of any moral agent, without the influence arising from the existence and punishment of sin; we have no reason to suppose that he *could* have done it.

But do you adopt it as a general principle, that God *could not* have done that which he has not done? or, that his not having done a thing, is a proof that he was not *able* to do it? For example; is the fact, that God did not make the planet which we inhabit as large as Jupiter, or that he did not give to men as high a degree of intelligence as he gave to angels, a proof that he *could* not? God's not having done a thing does indeed prove, that he judged it *best* not to do it, or that he had *good reasons* for not doing it. Does it prove anything more?

But I return to your question again. If God *could* prevent all sin, — why has he not done it?* And may I not put the following questions as equally proper? If God *could* send the gospel to all nations, why has he not done it? If he *could* have sent legions of angels to protect Jesus from the malice of his enemies; why did he not send them? To all such questions, Jesus has taught us to reply: "*Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.*" This I deem a sufficient reply to your question. God did not prevent all sin nor the present degree of it, *because it seemed good in his sight not to prevent it.* This answer is all

* The manner in which you put the question here seems to make a kind of solecism, not very unlike what you charge upon some imaginary opponents, (Concio, p. 7.) — "If God could prevent *all* sin without this influence," (i. e. the influence of sin actually existing,) "why has he not done it?" Do you mean to imply, that he could prevent *all* sin *with* this influence? But how could he prevent *all* sin by *means* of sin; when the very existence of the means would imply that *all* sin was not prevented? I suppose your meaning is, that God could not prevent the existence of sin in any part of the creation, without the influence of its existence and punishment in some other part.

that is necessary, and all that the case admits. In ten thousand instances, the particular reasons of God's conduct are unsearchable to us; but they are none the less weighty and none the less satisfactory for that. God is infinitely wise and good; and whatever he does is right. What if the reasons for it are unknown to us? Who are we, that we should expect to find out the Almighty to perfection? Implicit confidence in the Supreme Being, when the particular reasons of his conduct are unknown, is an exercise of faith which is altogether suitable for us, who are of yesterday and know nothing. It is in the exercise of such faith, that the mind of man finds its sweetest repose.

You seem to think it quite honorable to God to say, he *would* have prevented sin, but *could* not. And you ask, whether "he who is startled at your supposition," as though it limited the *power* of God, "does not limit the *goodness* of God?" But how does it limit the goodness of God, to say, he governs his conduct by the highest reasons, and refrains from doing what he sees to be on the whole best not to do?

You make a suggestion, which I shall notice more particularly in a subsequent Letter, namely: that God's *creatures* had power to prevent sin, but that *he* had not. (See Appendix 13.) "Had his creatures done what *they* could, then indeed there had been more holiness, and less sin." To *creatures*, then, you attribute a power, which you deny to the Creator. But from whom did they derive this power? Was it not from *God?* And in what does this power consist, but in the exercise of the nature which he has given them? Now is it true, that God has endued his creatures with a power, which he does not possess? Is it true, that his great work as Governor of the world is, to follow on after the movements of this independent power in his creatures, and to remedy, as far as in him lies, an evil which he could not prevent? Is it true, that he has created a sovereignty in his universe, over which he has no control, and which may therefore prostrate his benevolent designs? And is it true, that the Psalmist was so much mistaken, when he said, "Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven and in earth?

LETTER V.

Reverend and Dear Sir,

In the preceding Letter I began an examination of the arguments which you urge in favor of your theory, from the nature of the subject, and from facts. You have perceived that on this whole subject our views are radically different; and that, in my judgment, you have failed in both the arguments, by which you attempt to establish your hypothesis. I consider it an obvious mistake in you to suppose, that there is anything either in the nature of the subject, or in facts, which furnishes the least evidence against the common orthodox theory. But as the subject before us is remote from common apprehension, and requires, above most others, a patient and thorough examination; I would not pass over it in haste. I rather prefer to recur to the same topics again and again, and to subject myself to the charge of repetition, than to leave any form or aspect of your reasoning unnoticed, or any of the depths of your theory unexplored. And I would hope that in consequence of a free and candid examination, whatever is true and important in your peculiar views may be discovered and embraced, and that whatever is erroneous and delusive may be exposed and rejected.

The argument, on which you mainly rely, is the one you derive from the *nature of moral agency*. With this argument your theory must stand or fall.

You evidently think it reasonable and proper "to suppose, that such is the nature of *free agency* that God *could not* wholly prevent its perversion;" (see Appendix, 10;) which I understand to be the same as to suppose, that God could not prevent all sin, without destroying moral agency. But the divine influence, even the most *efficacious* divine influence upon our moral nature, is the very last thing in the universe, which I should suppose could destroy or injure it. From the moment in which God created a

moral world, he has, in various instances, been exerting his influence upon it in every conceivable manner, and in the highest degree.* He preserved angels in holiness, when their fellows apostatized. He has renewed sinners, who have been at the greatest remove from goodness; has given purity of heart to the most polluted, and subdued the most obstinate and rebellious; and has preserved his people from apostasy, when it could be done only by the exertion of great *power*, as well as love. But in any of these innumerable cases, in which the power of God has been effectually exerted among angels or men, has it in the least infringed upon their moral agency? Was an angel, or a redeemed sinner ever conscious that the divine power exerted upon him prevented moral action? Do we hear any complaints from holy beings of that benign and sanctifying influence which made them what they are? Do they regard the Spirit of God as an object of fear and terror, fitted, by his almighty operations, to reduce them from the rank of free moral beings? Do they not rather look for his influence with strong desire, and seek it with fervent prayer? The reason, if I mistake not, why you suppose that God could not prevent all sin without destroying moral agency, is, that you suppose he could not prevent all sin, without destroying the *power* to sin? (see Appendix, 12.) But does the whole history of moral agents furnish a single instance, in which the divine influence has been felt to abridge or destroy their proper power? On the contrary, the consciousness of every one who has been renewed by the Spirit of God may be cited as evidence, that the highest exertions of that Spirit are consistent with our moral nature, and harmonize entirely with our voluntary powers. The energy of God in the soul of man does not compel and degrade, but heals and elevates. When he moves the mind most powerfully and effectually, he still does it, not with an unwelcome force or violence, but with a kind, gentle, attractive influence, "congruous to the essential nature of the soul," and coalescing perfectly with our intellectual and moral faculties. In short, the power which God exerts in the prevention

* The words, *in various instances*, were evidently implied in the original, and are now added, to prevent all possibility of mistake.

of sin, so far from destroying our proper agency, only directs and secures it; and the power which he exerts in recovering from sin, so far from infringing our moral faculties, only restores them to health and vigor. Charnock says, "God, who knows how to make a will with a principle of freedom, knows how to work upon the will without intrenching upon or altering the essential privilege he bestowed upon it." "At what time God doth savingly work upon the will, to draw the soul from sin — it doth with the greatest willingness, — follow after God. *Draw me, we will run after thee.* Drawing signifies the efficacious power of grace; running signifies the delightful motion of grace: the will is drawn, as if it would not come; it comes, as if it were not drawn. His grace is so sweet and so strong, that he neither wrongs the liberty of his nature, nor doth prejudice his absolute power. The Spirit glides into the heart by sweet illapses of grace, and victoriously allures the soul, — not by crossing, but changing the inclination, by the all-conquering — charms of love. The power of the Spirit is sweet and irresistible. An inexpressible sweetness allures the soul, and an unconquerable power draws the soul."

Your theory, my dear Brother, supposes, that there is something in moral agency, which renders it impossible for divine power to control it. But what this something is, you have nowhere told us. I beg you now to look at the subject again; and then tell us, what is that *something*, — that *mysterious attribute* of moral agency, which thus frees it from its dependence on God? Who created moral agents? Who sustains them? Who governs the world, and directs all events, even those which flow directly from the character and actions of intelligent, moral beings? From some of your remarks, moral agency would seem to be a thing so extremely *delicate* and *frail*, as to be in danger of being spoiled by the most gentle, skilful touch of the divine hand; while from other remarks, it would seem to be so extremely *obstinate* and *unmanageable*, that the power which created worlds, cannot move it.

In regard to the point here at issue, I have the satisfaction of referring you to the views of that excellent man, your "revered Instructor in theology," whose name you so highly respect, and

with whom you claim the honor of agreeing in *every article of doctrinal belief.** He says, one of the methods of accounting for the introduction of sin, is, *that God could not prevent his creatures from sinning, without destroying their free agency.* But he states it as an unanswerable objection to this, " that God has actually preserved some of the angels from falling, and that he has promised to preserve, and will therefore certainly preserve the spirits of just men made perfect, and that this has been, and will be done *without infringing at all on their moral agency.* Of course he could just as easily have preserved Adam from falling without infringing on *his* moral agency." †

In the previous discussion I have meant to attend chiefly to that prominent point in your system, namely, *that God could not prevent all sin.* But I have considered you as maintaining also the more specific position, that *God could not prevent the present degree of sin, and he could not have done better than he has done for any individual.* By this last, you doubtless mean that he could neither have prevented any individual sinner from sinning, nor have caused him to sin less than he has sinned. For had God done either of these for any individual, he surely would " have done better for him."

It will, I think, conduce to the object of this discussion, and help us to test one of the great principles involved in your theory, if we now turn our attention for a while to this more particular and limited position. I have indeed occasionally remarked upon it in connection with the more general position, that God could not prevent *all* sin. But I wish to examine it more thoroughly, and to express my views of it more fully.

But I am reminded here, that you not unfrequently deny the positions, which your readers understand you to hold ; and that you may perhaps in the present case affirm, that you neither maintain nor admit the doctrine, just stated as yours. Should you do this, we should be happily relieved of a part of our difficulties. But even then, as your language is obviously liable to the construction I have given it, and thus may lead to views which

* See Preface to Concio ad clerum. † Dwight's Theology, Serm. 27.

I apprehend to be erroneous on a very important point; I could not regard the present discussion as needless; but should consider it right for me, according to the plan I proposed, to exhibit the objections which I feel to the above mentioned position, — to the position itself, even if you do not hold it.*

In general, I do not admit *that God could not have prevented any individual sinner from sinning, or caused him to sin less*, because such a position has no proof.

First; I say of this position, as I did of the general one, it has no proof from *fact*. God's not having converted particular sinners, or caused them to sin less, is no proof that he has not *power* to do it; considering that, in a thousand cases, God may have, and actually has reasons for not doing what he *could* do if he would.

Secondly; there is no proof of the position which we are now considering, from the *nature* or *circumstances of sinners*. One who is not converted, has the same nature, the same laws of mind, the same principles of moral agency, and the same corrupt dispositions, with those who are converted. As to his depravity; can it be supposed to exceed the depravity of all who are converted? Are the laws of mind, or the principles of moral agency more difficult to be managed in *him* than in *them?* And as to *free will* too; is it any more corrupt, any more obstinately biassed against holiness, any more hard to be subdued in *him* than in *them?* And if not, why should *his* conversion be thought impossible to God, while *theirs* has actually taken place?

In agreement with the best divines in New England, and in the Reformed churches generally, I hold that God, being infinitely powerful and good, would convert more sinners than he does, yea, all sinners, if he saw it to be on the whole for the best; or, if it seemed good in his sight. But the reasons of his conduct in this case, as in many others, are known only to his own infinite mind.

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* *Note to the Present Edition.*

The London Eclectic Review justifies me in imputing to Dr. Taylor the opinion referred to, saying, that while "he rejects the imputation of its being his own opinion," — "he returns to it in the general bearing of his argument." The article alluded to was written by Dr. John Pye Smith.

As to us; we see through a glass darkly; we know only in part. But what we know not now, we may know hereafter. The development of the divine character which will be made during the ten thousand ages to come, will cast a clearer light on the divine plan, and help us more adequately to understand its wisdom and goodness. Let us modestly suspend our judgment, and wait till that clearer light shines.

But you seem to apprehend certain particular and dreadful consequences, if God should convert one sinner more than he does. You say, (Appendix, 13,) "Had God prevented the sins of one human being to the present time, or had he brought to repentance one sinner more than he has; who can prove that the requisite interposition for the purpose would not result in a vast increase of sin in the system, including even the apostasy and augmented guilt of that individual?" You ask, who can prove that it would *not* result in this? And I ask, who can prove that it *would?* What shadow of reason is there to think that it would? "The requisite interposition" seems to you to be something dark and terrific, — something which might prove exceedingly dangerous to the order and happiness of the moral world. But in sober truth, what is that divine interposition, of which you have such apprehensions? It is merely this; that God, in great mercy, and by the effectual operation of his Spirit, should turn the sinner from darkness to light, and incline him to love and obey the gospel. This is the interposition which has been requisite in the case of every sinner who has been converted. Now has this divine interposition ever produced such an effect as you apprehend? Has it resulted "in a vast increase of sin in the system, and in the apostasy and augmented guilt of the individual converted?" I hold that the infinite grace of God in converting sinners never has produced, and never has had the least tendency to produce such a result, but the contrary, — directly the contrary. Is not the conversion of every sinner inseparably connected by the appointment of God, with his perseverance in holiness, and his final salvation? And has it not an obvious tendency to check the progress of wickedness in the world? As then, in all the instances

in which God has converted sinners from the beginning of the world to the present time, "the requisite interposition" has led to no such result as you specify; what reason have you to suppose that it would lead to such a result in any other case, and that God is prevented from converting more sinners than he does, for the particular reason that he sees, (or perhaps more properly *fears*,) that their conversion would *result in a vast increase of sin in the system, including the apostasy and augmented guilt of those very individuals?* And as in every instance of conversion in past times, the result has been contrary to this; what reason have you to doubt that it might be so in every other instance?

I will just remark, that if God had only the kind of power which man has, and if he could effect a no more radical change, than the fear of punishment or the desire of happiness can produce; then indeed might his interference be ineffectual, and saints might apostatize and perish, notwithstanding all he could do to prevent.

Thus far the view I have taken of the subject is chiefly negative. But I shall not stop here; as there is, if I mistake not, *direct*, *positive*, and *conclusive proof*, that God *has* power to convert and save any one, or any number of those sinners, who will in fact perish in impenitence. This proof I shall now adduce.

First. God is *omnipotent*. This implies, that he can do all his pleasure; that he can accomplish whatever he wishes to accomplish; that he can direct, as he pleases, all the external circumstances of moral beings, and all the springs of action within them, and can form their characters according to his will. The omnipotence of God implies, that he can do everything which is an object of power, everything to which power appertains, or to the accomplishment of which power can be applied.

That the conversion of a sinner is an object of power, and that to the accomplishment of it power is and must be applied, there can be no room for doubt. To this divine attribute the renewal of the heart is ascribed in the Scriptures. And this power, though some may improperly call it *physical*, is real and necessary. It is

that power which certainly produces the *effect* intended; that is, *gives the sinner a new heart and a new spirit.* That this effectual power of God in the renewal of a sinner does not violate moral agency, is, I should think, sufficiently apparent from the broad fact, *that in all the instances in which it has accomplished this gracious work, moral agency has been entirely uninjured and undisturbed.* God has frequently made very high and glorious displays of his power in the renovation of sinners, — a power which has subdued the most violent enmity, has overcome the most obstinate resistance, has melted the greatest hardness; a power like that which raises the dead. And yet there never has been the smallest degree, no, nor the smallest *appearance* of any injury to moral agency. And if God has thus effectually exerted his power in all instances of conversion, in a manner perfectly suited to the intellectual and moral faculties of man, and without any infringement of the principles of moral agency; I am quite unable to see why he cannot do the same in any other instance, when he pleases. And I cannot but think there are special reasons to believe that *moral agency*, the operations of which are so important, yea, so essential to the interests of the universe, is entirely under God's control.

But in regard to the question, whether the conversion of sinners is properly an object of power, I now appeal directly to the Scriptures.

The following passage, (Ephes. 1: 15—20,) is worthy of special notice. The Apostle says to the Christians at Ephesus; "I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ — may give you the spirit of wisdom, etc. — that ye may know what is the hope of his calling — and what is *the exceeding greatness of his power* toward us who believe, according to the working of *his mighty power*, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, etc." The Apostle here signified, that *very great divine power* had been exercised towards believers, i. e. in renewing them and bringing them to believe; a power which he compared to the working of that mighty power which raised Christ from the

dead. And another Apostle teaches, that believers are "kept by *the power of God* through faith unto salvation." 1 Pet. 1: 5. Thus both the commencement and the continuance of holiness in the redeemed are ascribed to *divine power*, and the former of these to *the exceeding greatness* of divine power.

I shall refer to one passage more, Mark 10: 27. Jesus had represented the salvation of the rich as exceedingly difficult. His disciples, greatly astonished at the representation, said, "who then can be saved? But Jesus, looking upon them, said; with men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible." He said this, it will be observed, in reference to the salvation of sinners, — of those whose salvation was most difficult, — of those too, who generally were not saved. Jesus declared, that it was *possible* for God to save, or that he *could* save even rich sinners, (though but few of them were actually saved,) and that he *could* save them, because he was *omnipotent;* or, as Christ expressed it, "because all things were possible with him." Being *omnipotent*, he was *able* to save those referred to, whether they were saved or not.

Behold here the difference between what our Saviour taught, and the doctrine of your note. Your doctrine is, as I understand it, that it is *impossible* for God to save one sinner more than he does. But Christ, speaking of a class of men who generally are not saved, says, it is *not* impossible for God to save them. Again, you say; "Had God's *creatures* done what *they* could, then indeed there had been more holiness and less sin; but what could *God* have done to secure such a result?" Christ said, such a thing was indeed *impossible* with *men*, but *possible* with *God;* whereas you say, it is *possible* with *men*, but *impossible* with *God.*

My second argument to prove that God has power to convert those sinners who are not converted, is derived from the fact, that *God has converted others.* Take sinners of the ordinary character, to whom salvation is offered, but who will in fact remain impenitent and perish. Is God *able* to convert them? *Can* he do it? This is the question. I suppose you hold the negative. I shall

maintain the affirmative, and shall do it here by this short and simple argument, namely; *God has converted other sinners; therefore he has power to convert these;* — just as we prove that God has power, when he pleases, to raise the dead, from the fact that, in various instances, he *has* done it. As to the power of raising the dead, this proof from fact is perfectly conclusive, unless there is some hinderance to the resurrection of those whom God might wish to raise, which did not exist in the case of any who have been raised, and unless this hinderance is so great, that omnipotence cannot overcome it. The same in reference to the case now before us. That the unchangeable God *can* convert the sinners above supposed, is evident from the fact that he has converted others; unless the conversion of these is attended with some difficulty, which has never attended the conversion of others, and which omnipotence itself could not overcome. But what can this new difficulty be? Difficulties many and great have been overcome. Pride, selfishness, hardness of heart, yea, sin of every kind, and every degree, (with only one exception,) has, in numberless instances, been subdued by the power of God's Spirit. And can it be supposed, that the sinners now in view have greater pride, selfishness, or hardness of heart, than any of those whom divine grace has saved? Have not some of the chief of sinners been converted? And is not that Almighty Spirit, which converted *them*, able to convert *these?*

There can be no doubt in the present case as to the sufficiency of *the means*, spoken of by some as God's *moral power*. For God has the same means of converting these sinners, as of converting those who are saved. And in particular, he has that which you consider so important and efficacious, namely, "the influence arising from the existence and punishment of sin." For thousands of years sin has existed, and been openly punished; and the more dreadful punishment which awaits it in another world, has been clearly revealed. This mighty influence, together with the influence of the whole system of truths made known by the Scriptures, God has perfectly at command, and can use, according to the good pleasure of his will, for the conversion of all who enjoy the light

of the gospel. He has, in thousands of instances, found a small part of these means sufficient. And where they are all enjoyed, it cannot still be that God is unable to convert sinners for want of this moral *power*.

My third argument to prove, that God is able to convert those sinners whom he does not convert, is, that *we are required to pray for their conversion.*

All rational prayer evidently implies, that we believe in God's power to do what we ask him to do. Should we consider God as unable to do a particular thing, or even doubt his ability to do it; how could we consistently make it a subject of prayer? In such a case, our prayer would at best be like the request of the man, who brought his distressed child to Jesus, and, with a mixture of unbelief with faith, said; "If thou *canst* do anything, have compassion on us, and help us." We may indeed ask God for many things which are in themselves desirable, though we may not know that he can grant them consistently with his infinite wisdom. So Jesus prayed that his Father would take away the cup, if it were possible; that is, if it could be done consistently with his holy will. Asking God to do what is not expressly promised, with an ultimate reference of our request to his sovereign will, is an expression of filial confidence. But with what a timid, half-despairing spirit should we offer up our petitions to God, if we thought he might not have *power* to grant them? After the Apostle Paul had asked for the most precious blessings for the Ephesians, his exalted views of the divine character led him to conclude thus: "Now unto him who is *able* to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think — unto him be glory in the church." But such views as you seem to entertain, would lead us to fear, that we might ask for more than God was able to perform, and when we had freely expressed our desires to him, to add, instead of the joyful ascription of the Apostle, the discouraging qualification; — Grant these desires, O Lord, *if thou canst;* save the sinners around us, *if thou hast sufficient power;* turn them from sin, and give them a new heart, *if thou art able.* With such a chilling apprehension as this, — with the doubt resting on our minds.

whether God had *power* to accomplish what we might most ardently desire, and what he too might desire and know to be on the whole best; how could we attain to that spirit of prayer, and that high confidence in God, exhibited by prophets and apostles?

My fourth argument in support of the same position is, *that the sacred writers often speak of the conversion of sinners as depending on the* WILL, COUNSEL, *or* PLEASURE *of God*, but never as depending on the condition of his having sufficient *power* to convert them.

The Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, says; "God hath mercy on whom he *will* have mercy." Not a word signifying that God had no *power* to do otherwise, or that the only thing he *could* do was either not to create moral agents, or to leave such a part of them to perish in sin. If the Apostle had imbibed such an opinion as yours, here, I should suppose, would have been the very place for him to declare it. As he found it necessary to meet the objection which unbelievers urged against the conduct of God, in saving some and leaving others to perish; how natural and convenient might it have been for him to say; who can complain of God on this account, when he has done all that he *could* for the salvation of every human being? But the Apostle treats the subject very differently, and teaches very plainly, that God's having mercy on some and not on others, was a matter of choice; that he proceeded in this concern according to his own *will.* Instead of questioning the power of God, he takes pains to illustrate that power, and God's right to use it as he pleased, by a striking similitude. "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel to honor and another to dishonor?" — implying that God's converting or not converting sinners depends on his sovereign pleasure. The Apostle in other places teaches, that God calls and saves men according to *the counsel of his own will.* But where does he intimate that God is prevented from converting sinners by want of power? — that he *would* convert them if he *could?* — or that he does not renew them by the Holy Spirit because he *cannot?* It seems to me, that your

theory, as commonly understood, must lead those who embrace it to differ very widely from the Scriptures in their manner of treating the divine administration in regard to the conversion of sinners, and, as I suggested before, to offer just such an apology for God, as we sometimes make for a weak, imperfect man, when he has done all the good he *could*, though not so much as he *wished*.

LETTER VI.

Reverend and Dear Sir,

I have a few additional remarks to offer on one of the subjects brought into view in the preceding letters. You say, (Appendix, 13,) "We know of no creature of God, whose holiness is secured without that influence, which results — from the existence of sin and its punishment."* In reply to this, I have referred to the "first estate" of the angels who fell, which was a state of holiness. It appears then that those angels who are now happy in heaven, were, for a time, preserved in holiness, without the influence arising from the existence and punishment of sin. Even at the very time when others fell, they were preserved without that influence; for, evidently, that influence must have followed both the existence and the punishment of sin. My argument is, that as God did this for a season, he could have done it longer, even to the present time, had he judged it on the whole best. And the argument I think conclusive, unless we are at liberty to suppose something in their character or state, which rendered it more difficult for God to preserve them holy afterwards, than during the first period of their existence; and so much more difficult, that omnipotence

* "This," says the Eclectic Review, "is indeed a bold assumption, — that there could be no such thing as virtue in the world, if there were no spectacle of punishment." See Review of Woods's Letters to Taylor.

itself could not preserve them, without the help of additional means. But is anything like this supposable? Can we imagine that their character or state after a while became such, and that God could not prevent its becoming such, as to render higher power and more efficacious means necessary to their preservation; a power too which God himself could not exercise, and means which he could not command? Is there any reason to think that the experience they had of the goodness of God and the happiness of serving him, rendered them less inclined to serve him? — that the exercise of love weakened the habit of love? — that by their residence in heaven they became less and less attached to the place, and at length came so near to a state of disaffection, that the Almighty himself had no way to hold them to their allegiance, except by resorting to a new set of means, and displaying before them the terrific consequences of sin?

Say, if you please, that in the progress of the moral system, new circumstances of temptation might arise. But could not God either prevent those circumstances from occurring; or keep his exposed servants at a distance from them; or shield their minds effectually against an influence which endangered their purity? Could he not have done as much in relation to them, as your Reviewers say he could have done in relation to our first parents; that is, prevented the access of temptation, or by a divine influence prevented their yielding to it?*

Be it so, that God saw it to be on the whole best, to make use of the influence arising from the existence and punishment of sin, in preserving and increasing the holiness of angels. Does this prove that he had not power to do it without that influence? Because the way which God has actually chosen to promote the holiness of his creatures is the *wisest* and *best*, are we hence to conclude that it is the only way *possible?*

It is a part of the doctrine of *moral necessity*, as taught by Edwards and others, that moral actions are *effects* resulting from their proper causes; that these causes, and the manner of their operation, depend ultimately on God; and that, in perfect accor-

* See Christian Spectator, 1829, p. 381.

dance with the laws of moral agency, he can excite moral beings to such affections and actions as he pleases. According to this doctrine, the connection between cause and effect is as certain and uniform in the moral world, as in the natural; although the *nature* of cause and effect in the one case is totally different from what it is in the other. In both cases, where all the causes or previous circumstances are perfectly the same, the effect will be the same. This principle, which I think intuitively certain, may supply a proper answer to the following question in your Concio ad Clerum (p. 30.) You say to the person whom you address;—"Suppose God had made you just like Adam, or even like Lucifer, and placed you in similar circumstances; do you know that you would not have sinned as he did?" The answer I give to this question is, that any one would undoubtedly have done as Adam or as Lucifer did, had he been in all respects just like him, and placed in circumstances perfectly similar. But why confine the supposition to such a case? Instead of making the being in question just like Adam or Lucifer, suppose God had made him just like *Gabriel*, and placed him in precisely the same circumstances, and under the influence of the same causes; can any one doubt that he would have acted as Gabriel did? And may not the individual, whose objections you have attempted to remove, still demand of you the reason, why a God of infinite benevolence did not give him such a nature, and place him in such circumstances, as would secure him from apostasy?

You have seen that I do not undertake to solve the various difficulties, which attend the existence of moral evil. And when I consider that this subject has in all ages perplexed the minds of the greatest philosophers and theologians, and has often been acknowledged by the most intelligent men to be involved in inscrutable mystery; I confess myself slow to believe that it can be so easily cleared up, as some imagine. I should certainly think it presuming in me to suppose, that I had discovered or could discover a solution, which had escaped so many distinguished and patient inquirers; and still more presuming, to confide in any theory of my own as perfectly valid, which stood in opposition to the faith

of the great body of ministers and Christians through the world. Whether the theory which you have introduced is valid, and affords a satisfactory solution of the difficulties attending the subject, is a question which I have endeavored to examine, and on which the public will decide.

The two positions, which you call "very common but groundless assumptions," have already been stated. I have particularly attended to the second of these, and to the position which I have considered you as maintaining in opposition to it. I now proceed to the consideration of the other position.

You regard it as a very common, but groundless assumption, *that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good, and that as such, so far as it exists, it is preferable on the whole to holiness in its stead.* As you reject the position that sin *is* the necessary means of the greatest good, you doubtless hold that it is *not;* and accordingly you suggest a variety of reasons to support this position, and to confute the common one.

It would be uncandid in me to suppose, that there was anything designedly enigmatical in what you have written on this point; or that in addition to a meaning which is obvious, you have another which is concealed, or almost concealed. In my remarks, therefore, I shall proceed on the supposition, that the meaning which your words have conveyed to my mind, and to the minds of others generally, is the meaning you intended to convey.

And here the first thing which must occur to the minds of your readers is, *that in the latter part of your note, you assert and take pains to prove the very point, which in the former part you deny.*

In my reasoning on this subject, I shall not in every instance repeat the whole of what you call the first groundless assumption; because this would be unnecessary and cumbersome; and because the different phrases are of nearly the same import; and your own method is, to take one or the other of them, as the turn of thought or expression seems to render convenient.

The position to which I now refer, and which I suppose you to deny in the first part, and affirm in the second part of your note, is, *that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good.*

You say, (Appendix, 13,) "We know of no creature of God whose holiness is secured without the influence which results, either directly or indirectly, from the existence of sin and its punishment. How then can it be proved from facts that God *could* secure any of his moral creatures in holiness without this influence?" Now to say, that no creature of God *is* or *could* be preserved in holiness without the influence arising from the existence and punishment of sin, is clearly the same as to say, that the existence and punishment of sin is the *necessary means* of securing any one in holiness. Thus, if we should say, there is no man who could live without the influence of air, our meaning would be, that air is the *necessary means* of preserving human life. The next step is equally sure. If, as you maintain, the existence and punishment of sin is the necessary means of preserving any of God's creatures in holiness; then the existence and punishment of sin is the necessary means of the *greatest good;* for certainly the greatest good requires, that some of God's creatures should be preserved in a state of holiness.

Thus your reasoning in the latter part of the note, is really a confutation, — and if it were only from another writer, I should say, a *direct* and *studied* confutation, of what you advance in the former part. You first maintain that sin is *not* the necessary means of the greatest good; and then you maintain that the holiness of intelligent creatures, which you certainly regard as involved in the greatest good, could not in any instance, no, not even by the power of God, be preserved without the existence and punishment of sin. *There*, sin is *not* the necessary means of the greatest good; *here*, sin, by its existence and punishment, *is* the *necessary*, *indispensable means* of that holiness of moral beings, in which the greatest good essentially consists.

But my conclusion does not depend on the single passage above quoted; but on the language and the argument extending through a great part of the paragraph. You ask, "Do not all known facts

furnish a strong presumption to the contrary ? " — that is, a strong presumption against the supposition, that God could prevent sin in any of his creatures without the influence arising from its existence and punishment in others. This is as much as to say, and to say emphatically, that all facts prove the existence and punishment of sin to be the *necessary means* of preserving any of God's creatures in holiness, and so, of course, the necessary means of the *greatest good.* You say too ; " If God *could* prevent *all* sin without this influence, why has he not done it ? " The question clearly shows what was in the mind of the writer, namely : that if God had not regarded the existence and punishment of sin as the necessary means of preventing sin in the great body of moral beings, and so of promoting the greatest good ; he would have done without it. " If he *could* prevent all sin without this influence, why has he not done it ? " Again, in the next sentence, you ask ; " Who is competent to foretell the consequences of the least iota of change in the present system of influence to produce holiness and prevent sin ? " — clearly intimating that the influence arising from the existence and punishment of sin, which you consider an essential part of the present system of influence, is the *necessary means* of guarding against the most fearful consequences, and of accomplishing the best ends ; and so that the least change of the system of influence in this respect would be of fatal tendency ; that is, *sin*, *yea*, *all the sin that exists*, (for there must not be the least iota of change,) *is absolutely necessary to the greatest good.*

The Reviewer of Taylor and Harvey, (Christian Spectator for June, 1829, p. 330,) appears to concur in the same opinions. He says, " If they " (that is, moral beings) " are kept from sinning, it is not because they *cannot* sin, but because obedience is their choice. Do we know that there must not, in the nature of the case, be a display of the feelings and determinations of God in regard to sin, *as actually committed*, in order to the exertion of that moral influence, by which alone creatures who *can* sin, will, in all the circumstances of their being, remain obedient ? We do know that the only wise God has taken occasion from sin to accu-

mulate the influences of his moral government upon the minds both of angels and men, ever since time began. The existence of this evil is presupposed in the system by which God is displaying himself in his brightest glories, to the view of both angels and men, and bringing the whole weight of his character to bear upon their minds, to secure their obedience. And do we know of any other way in which the apostasy of the subjects of a moral government *could* have been prevented ?"

"These thoughts," continues the Reviewer, "are not new. Dr. Dwight says, *how far the fall and punishment of some moral beings may, in the nature of the case, be indispensably necessary to the persevering obedience of the great body, cannot be determined by us.*"

I have not introduced the views expressed in these passages, for the sake of controverting them; for I consider them for the most part correct; but for the sake of confirming the construction which I have put upon the expressions quoted from your note. It would be difficult for me to conceive of any language, which would more clearly set forth the *necessity* of moral evil in order to promote the greatest good, than that which I have now cited from the Review. First, it is signified, rather cautiously, and by implication, that there *must* be a display of God's feelings in regard to sin, as *actually committed*, in order to the exertion of that moral influence which is necessary to preserve moral agents in a state of obedience. But cautious as the language is, it shows satisfactorily that the Reviewer considers the existence of moral evil as the *necessary means* of promoting that obedience of intelligent creatures, which is certainly implied in the greatest good. But he proceeds to say; "The existence of this evil is presupposed in the system by which God is displaying himself in his brightest glories, etc." This clearly is as much as to say, it is presupposed in the system by which God will secure *the greatest good.* The Reviewer finally waxes bolder, and says; "do we know of any other way in which the apostasy of the subjects of a moral government *could* have been prevented ?" — implying that the existence of moral evil is, so far as we know, the necessary and only effectual means

of preserving moral beings in a state of holiness, and of course, the necessary means of promoting the *greatest good.* And the quotation is made from Dr. Dwight for the very purpose of giving countenance to the idea, that the existence and punishment of sin may be *indispensably necessary* to that persevering obedience of the great body of moral beings, which constitutes so essential a part of the highest good of the system.

The contradiction would, I think, be equally striking, should we take the second clause of what you consider the first groundless assumption, and compare it with what you have written in the latter part of your note. I understand you in the first place to deny, that *sin, so far as it exists, is preferable on the whole to holiness in its stead;* and my allegation is, that after denying this, you impliedly affirm it, and represent *sin, so far as it exists, as preferable on the whole to holiness in its stead.* When you speak of sin *so far as it exists*, I suppose you speak of it in reference to the particular instances in which it has actually occurred. Now all the sin which exists in the universe, so far as we know, is the sin of a part of the angels, and the sin of man. This therefore we may properly call, *sin so far as it exists.* Concerning this actually existing sin, we are to inquire, whether it is *on the whole preferable to holiness in its stead.* Your representations imply that it is. In various ways you show it to be your opinion, that it was impossible for *any* beings, and certainly for the great body of moral beings, to be preserved holy, without the influence of sin. It is implied in your statements, that if man, and the angels who sinned, had been preserved from sin, a dreadful rebellion must have broken out in some other part of the universe. The fair question would then be, whether it is better on the whole, that sin should exist in that part, that small part of the moral creation, where it has taken place, and be made the means of effectually preserving all the rest; or that God, by a peculiar effort of his omnipotence, should prevent sin in that small part, and thereby expose the rest, that is, the great body of moral beings, to certain ruin; or perhaps, according to your views, expose the *whole* to certain ruin, in the end: for you hold that *none* could be preserved from apostasy

without the influence arising from the existence and punishment of sin. Now you doubtless think, as your remarks imply, that as sin, which is in itself a great evil, *must* exist in a moral system, it is very important that it should be confined within as narrow limits as possible, and that it is far preferable it should exist with all its dreadful consequences, in a small part of the system, that is, just "*so far as it does exist*," than that holiness should in the same part exist in its stead, and sin and perdition reign, as you think they would, through all the other parts, and finally through this part also, of God's mighty empire. You think it very important, that God should *secure the greatest degree of holiness, and the least degree of sin, which is possible.* And as the sin which has actually occurred in a part of the system is, as you hold, an indispensable means, under the government of God, of preserving the great body of moral beings in a state of holiness; this sin (that is, "sin so far as it exists") will, under the divine government, have such an influence, as to secure in the end the greatest degree of holiness and the least degree of sin. Whereas, if God had interposed to prevent the sin which now exists in a part of the system, and to secure holiness in its stead; the result would have been, certainly *might* have been, exceedingly hurtful to the universe; because on supposition of "the least iota of change in the present system of influence," and especially on supposition of *such* a change, God might, according to your scheme, have been unable to *secure the greatest degree of holiness and the least degree of sin which was possible in the nature of things.* And this is the same as saying, that the sin which now exists, or sin so far as it exists, being the necessary means of the greatest good, is, in that view, preferable to holiness in its stead. And it is clearly your apprehension, if your Reviewer has understood you right, that this preferableness of sin in a part of the system, considered as a means of guarding against a larger amount of sin in the whole, was the very reason why God did not interpose to prevent it. For, according to the Reviewer, your scheme "supposes that in a moral system, God could have prevented each sin individually considered;" which implies, that he could have prevented

the sin of each angel, and the sin of each man. But he says, your scheme supposes also, that the arrangement which would have been necessary to accomplish this "might have been connected with a greater amount of sin in the general result;" — as much as to say, that in the particular instances in which sin actually exists, it is preferable to holiness in its stead, as it will be the means of preventing a greater amount of sin in the general result; and that God, regarding it in this light, and knowing what an arrangement was necessary to preserve men and angels from committing it, did not make that arrangement; though he would have decidedly chosen to make it, had he not apprehended such an unhappy result.

Here consider how all this is consistent with that remarkable passage in your note; "Had God's creatures done what *they* could, then indeed there had been more holiness and less sin. But the question is, what could *God* have done to secure such a result?" Suppose now God's creatures *had* done what you signify they could have done, and had all chosen to be holy. What then? why then, they would all have *been* holy, and been so without the influence of sin, and would thus have proved that to be possible which you say is impossible, and would have proved too, according to your theory, that God's creatures can do, what he cannot.

This then appears to be the true state of the case. In one part of your note you *reject* the position, that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good; in another part of the same note, you *maintain* this position; laboring with great zeal, to show that sin *is* the necessary means of the greatest good, as no moral agents *could* be preserved in a state of holiness without its existence and punishment. And this is confirmed by the Reviewer, who holds, in perfect accordance with your note, that there must be a display of God's feelings towards sin, *as actually existing*, in order that his creatures may, in all the circumstances of their being, be influenced to remain obedient.

But I have a few additional remarks. That the Governor of the world does actually make use of moral evil as a means of pre-

serving his creatures in a state of holiness, is a fact which I admit as fully as you do. This is *one* means among *many*. And when we find that God actually makes use of this means; what is the just conclusion? That he had not *power* to influence them to obedience by other means? This does not follow at all. What then does follow from the fact that God makes use of moral evil as one means of influencing moral agents to obedience? It follows, that God saw it to be *proper* to do so; that it was a mode of influence which in the exercise of his wisdom he chose, — chose in preference to using other means of influence exclusively of this, — chose, not because he was *unable* to preserve his creatures holy by other means without this, but because he saw it to be wisest and best, on the whole, to make use of this means in connection with others. It follows, that making use of moral evil, in connection with other means, was a mode of government, which God, taking all things into view, judged to be better than any other, — more honorable to his character, and more conducive, on the whole, to the good of his universal kingdom. This I think is the just, and the only just conclusion from the fact. When God does a thing, we know that thing, the thing which he does, to be right. When he does a thing in a particular way, we know that way to be wise and proper. When he does it in that way in preference to other ways, which might appear to us desirable, we conclude, not that he was *unable* to do it in those other ways, but that, for good reasons, unknown perhaps to us, he judged this to be a better way.

It is undoubtedly the case that God will, on the whole, promote a higher amount of holiness and happiness in his moral empire by means of moral evil, than could have been promoted without it. But this does not imply, that God was *unable* to exclude sin entirely from a moral system, and that he was, as you seem to think, absolutely shut up to the alternative of having *no moral system*, or the one which now exists. The infinite mind of God might surely conceive of moral systems beyond our power of numbering, all possible to his omnipotence, and all good in higher or lower degrees; and many of these might be systems which

should exclude all sin, and contain high degrees of good unmingled with evil. And even in respect to a system originally constructed like the present; might it not be possible in God's view, that it should be so managed, or be under such an administration, that it should be wholly free from natural and moral evil, and in this way secure a large amount of holiness and happiness? Might not many methods of administration in such a system as this originally was, be equally possible to God, and equally possible in themselves? And so, humanly speaking, might not God have a choice among a great variety of ways in which he was able to manage such a system, all of which ways might be in different degrees good; and might not God see that the particular mode of proceeding which he actually adopted, was better than any other; — that it was suited to make a more glorious display of his attributes; and though it would not entirely exclude evil, would ultimately raise his kingdom at large to a higher degree of holiness and happiness, than any other? In this view might not God actually prefer it, and fix upon it? And would not this be a choice worthy of God?

There is a particular expression in your note, to which you seem to attach more than ordinary consequence. You say, God may "purpose sin though wholly an evil, considered as *incidental, so far as his power of prevention is concerned*, to the best moral system." So in the sermon, you speak with approbation of the "supposition, that the evil which exists is, *in respect to the divine prevention*, incidental to the best possible system." Not a few have found this language to be of difficult interpretation. I shall here endeavor to ascertain its meaning.

To say that a particular evil is *incidental* or *incident* to a man, is to say, that *it may happen to him*, unless prevented by special means; that he is *liable* to it; is *exposed* to *suffer* it, if a natural evil, — to *commit* it, if a moral evil. Thus we say, disease or pain is *incident* to human nature at every period of life, — not implying that it *certainly will come* upon human nature at every period of life, or that it cannot *possibly* be prevented; but that human nature is such as, in ordinary circumstances, to be *liable* to

it. It is often the case that evils which are *incident* to man, are in fact prevented. Their being *incident* to man is one thing; their actual occurrence another. When therefore it is said, "sin is *incidental* to the best moral system," I suppose the meaning must be, that the best moral system is *liable* to it, and that, unless specially prevented, it may take place. Its being *incidental* cannot mean that it certainly will occur. The very phrase seems to imply that it may not take place; and so that its taking place, or not taking place, will not prevent the moral system from being the best.

We come now to the other phrase, "so far as God's power of prevention is concerned." I might here ask, why you speak of God's power of prevention, when you maintain that he has no such power at all? I have sometimes thought that, instead of the language, "sin is incidental to the best moral system, *so far as God's power of prevention is concerned*," the expression might have been, that sin is incidental, *notwithstanding* any power in God to prevent. But then the question would arise; to prevent what? The natural construction would seem to be, to prevent sin *from being incidental.* But this cannot be your meaning. From the current of your remarks I conclude, that God's power of prevention must be intended to relate, not to sin's being *incidental*, but to its actual occurrence. And if so, the sense intended might perhaps be conveyed in some such language as this; the best moral system is liable to sin, and the omnipotence of God cannot prevent its occurrence, — or, it may actually take place *notwithstanding* his omnipotence. I am confirmed in this construction by various things in your note.

Now it is desirable to make every subject as plain and simple as possible, and for this purpose to lay aside whatever needs no discussion. The fact that sin is, in a general sense, *incidental* to moral beings in a state of trial, or that they are *liable* to sin, is admitted by all. This therefore may be laid out of the question. The question, and the only one which claims attention here, is, whether God has power to prevent moral beings from actually committing sin. And to this I have particularly attended in the previous discussion.

Let me say one thing in addition. If you are here speaking of that which is in itself contradictory, and which is not an object of power; then why should you say anything about God's *power of prevention?* In respect to any subject which involves a contradiction, you surely would not speak in this manner. You would not say the whole of a thing is greater than a part, *so far as God's power of prevention is concerned*, or notwithstanding any power in God to prevent. Nor would you say, holiness is different from sin, or happiness is different from misery, *so far as God's power of prevention is concerned.* Or if you should speak in this manner, it would be difficult to know your meaning.

LETTER VII.

Reverend and Dear Sir,

In the present Letter I shall go into a brief examination of your reasoning, respecting what you call the first common but groundless assumption. (See Appendix, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.)

The object of your remarks in the part of your note here referred to, is to make it appear, that the common position of the orthodox is inconsistent with the benevolence and sincerity of God, with his commands and invitations, and with the duty of sorrowing for sin.*

In your remarks on these subjects, I feel a very deep, and I must say, painful interest, on account of their practical nature and tendency. It affords me, however, some satisfaction to learn, that

* The following is a quotation from the Eclectic Review, before referred to. "Dr. Taylor endeavors to show that, on any hypothesis but his own, there can be no sincerity in the divine prohibitions, and no equity in the punishment of sin. This is an old sophism so often exposed, that a respectable and well informed writer might have known better than to take it up anew."—"Nothing can be more crude and inconsequential than the inference, that if sin in any way produces good, it ought to be enjoined, and when perpetrated, rewarded."

not a few of those, who have been inclined to favor your speculations on other points, dissent from you on this, and look upon your reasoning as without any force, and of dangerous tendency.

It is obviously your opinion, and one in which all orthodox Christians will readily unite with you, that the *prohibition* and *punishment* of sin is necessary, to give it any salutary influence in the moral world. Sin in its own nature is evil, and as such must be prohibited by the divine law, and, if committed, must be punished. Its being prohibited by law, and punished according to law, is all that gives it a salutary influence, or makes it the occasion of good. Unlike holiness, which, in its own proper nature, is good, and of salutary tendency, sin, in itself, is evil, and directly tends to evil, and becomes the means or occasion of good only *indirectly*, from the manner in which it is treated, that is, its being *forbidden* and *punished.* To this view I have no doubt you will fully assent. Now God's *law* respects sin, *as it is in itself*, or *in its own nature and tendency.* He forbids it, because it is a *wrong* and *hurtful* thing in a moral agent. As sin is in truth totally wrong, hateful, and pernicious, God would not treat it *according to truth*, he would not treat it according to his own feelings respecting it, he would not treat it *sincerely*, if he did not forbid it by his law, or if he did not punish it when committed. It must be evident then, that whenever we represent sin as on the whole for the best, or, according to your manner of thinking, as having an influence by which moral beings are preserved in a state of holiness; we represent it, not as it is, taken *by itself*, but *as treated in the divine government*, — as *forbidden*, *frowned upon*, *punished.* . When let alone, or left to itself, its whole influence and tendency is directly and violently opposed to the good of the universe, or to the holiness and happiness of moral beings; and it is only when condemned by God's holy law, and controlled and punished by his Almighty Providence, that any good can come out of this essential and destructive evil. It is God's righteous government respecting sin, which counteracts its natural tendency, and prevents the pernicious effects which it would of itself produce.

To all this I should suppose you would entirely agree, did you not seem to oppose it by various objections. You say, "If such is the nature of God, of man, etc., that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good; ought it not to be made the subject of precept — would it not be, by a benevolent moral governor?" By this I understand you to mean *that if the common theory is true, sin ought to be required;* an objection to the common orthodox theory which I have often heard from the adversaries of truth, but never before from an orthodox minister.

With regard to this reasoning of yours, I remark, that if sin were *required*, it could not be the means of the greatest good; since that which now makes it so, would then be wanting. In this objection to the common theory, do you not overlook the great and obvious difference between the proper tendency of sin, considered in its own nature, and the influence which it is made to have by the divine government which opposes it? Do you not overlook the broad distinction between the intention of the sinner, who means sin only for evil, and the intention of God, who means it for good, and who, by his righteous administration, brings good out of it? What validity then is there in the objection?

You next suggest a difficulty, — and you make it a very plausible one, — as to the *sincerity* of God in forbidding what he sees to be on the whole for the best, and requiring what he sees would not be on the whole for the best. But, while I admit that sin, under the divine government, will on the whole be for the best; I hold that God could not possibly *be sincere* if he did not forbid it, and require the holiness which is opposed to it. For what is it to be *sincere?* Is it not to speak and act according to one's real feelings? And if God really looks upon sin as in its own nature a wrong and hateful thing, and if he really disapproves and hates it; then, to maintain the character of *sincerity*, he must *show* his disapprobation and hatred of it, both in his law and administration; that is; he must *forbid* it, and *punish* it. His seeing that under his righteous government it will on the whole be for the best, and his determining to use his power and wisdom to make it so, do not alter its intrinsic nature, nor his *views* of it. Now sin

is, in truth, a *wrong* and *hateful* thing; and God will overrule it for good by making it appear to the universe, that it is what it is. Certainly, the God of heaven sees, that sin is an evil and abominable thing, and hostile to the interests of his kingdom, and as such, he forbids it in his law, and punishes it in his administration. His law can neither regard it nor forbid it in any other light. It cannot be, that the law should forbid the *good* which the divine government will cause to result from the existence of sin. This is entirely another matter. In his law God addresses us as moral beings, and requires or forbids particular actions as *good* or *bad in their own nature;* shows us our province, as intelligent creatures; points out our proper work, and our only work. It does not belong to us to assume the office of government, and to guide the affairs of God's empire. He does not call us to come up, and sit with him on the throne, to deliberate and judge as to the best system of the universe, to wield the sceptre, and, by an act of omnipotence, to educe good from evil. This is a work which God reserves to himself. What he requires of *us* is *duty*, — right feelings, and right actions. And in all this, is he not *sincere* and *true?* Does he not say what he means? Does he not in his own mind consider that to be our duty, which in his law he enjoins upon us as our duty? Does he not *mean* to require what he requires in his word? And does he not mean to reward or punish us, exactly according to his declarations? And if so, is he not *sincere* in the requisitions of his law? — But while God, in his law, marks out the work which he requires of us, he does not tell us that the highest glory of his character, and the highest interest of his kingdom, cannot possibly be promoted without our obedience. He does not tell us that our disobedience cannot be so overruled by his almighty providence, that, in its final results, it shall occasion great good to the universe. He does not tell us, as if conscious of weakness and dependence, that if we refuse to glorify him by our obedience, he must give up his glory as unattainable; or that, if we neglect to promote the good of his kingdom, that kingdom must be injured and ruined. Not a word of this. He does indeed plainly inform us how he requires us, as moral agents, to promote

his glory and the good of his kingdom, that is, by loving and obeying him. This is the work which he assigns to us. And he commands us to seek our own welfare and that of others, by accomplishing this work, and in no other way. But does this prove that he himself will not so treat sin in his government, as to make it on the whole for the best? How does it prove this? Suppose that he does make it the occasion of the greatest good. Is this to the credit of *sin?* Can this take away the evil of sin, and render it our duty to commit it, and make it proper that God should *require* us to commit it? That is, in a word, does God's holy act in *opposing* sin and demonstrating to the universe its evil and hateful nature, *take away* its evil nature, and make it a proper thing to be required as a duty?

At the final consummation, this subject, I apprehend, will be placed in a very clear light. It will then appear, that God's law, which pointed out our duty, was holy, just, and good; and that we were under the highest obligations to glorify his name and promote the welfare of his kingdom by unceasing obedience. And it will then be equally apparent, that, notwithstanding our disobedience, he took care to provide for his own glory and the good of his kingdom, and that he even made our disobedience a means of promoting that great object. It will then appear, that in order to accomplish his sovereign purpose to bring good out of evil, he did not judge it necessary or proper to contradict himself, to bend his law, and require us to do evil that good might come — to sin that he might be glorified. And it will then appear too, that that mysterious administration, which caused the wrath of man to praise God, and made sin the means of the greatest good, resulted wholly from the wisdom and power of Jehovah, and that the undivided glory of it belongs to him forever.

But there is still another view to be taken of this subject. If we should be required to commit sin, because it is on the whole for the best, or because it is the necessary means of the greatest good; we must evidently be required to sin, and must commit sin, *for the purpose* of promoting that good; that is, we must be required, *in committing sin*, to *aim* at that good. Accordingly,

when you are speaking of the person who commits sin, and who is apprised that sin will on the whole be the means of the greatest good, you inquire how it would appear that he does not perform the act *from a benevolent intention.* Now could anything be more singular, than such an inquiry? — *How does it appear, that the person who commits sin in such circumstances, does not perform the act from a benevolent intention?* — Why, to say that we are required to sin, or that we do sin, "with a benevolent intention," that is, with a desire to promote the good of God's kingdom, is the grossest of all absurdities. It is the same as to say, we are required to promote or that we aim to promote an object, by *opposing* it; to seek to honor God, by seeking to *dishonor* him; to show our love to God, by *hating* him; to endeavor to advance the good of the universe, by endeavoring to *destroy* it.

In illustration of what you say respecting our being required to commit sin, and our committing it with a benevolent intention, you refer to the destruction of the Canaanites by the children of Israel. And I acknowledge the illustration would be in point, if the act of destroying the Canaanites had been required of them *as sin*, or if it had been really sinful. But as the fact was altogether different from this, the illustration entirely fails. And so it must be with every example intended to illustrate so manifest an absurdity. Whereas numerous examples, such as the selling of Joseph into Egypt, the crucifixion of Christ, the martyrdom of the apostles, and other events of a similar kind, clearly illustrate the truth, that God overrules the sinful actions of men, which they intended only for evil, for the good of his kingdom, and that he suffered them to take place for this purpose.

Entertaining the views which I have above expressed on this subject, I know not how to account for it, that you should advance the opinions on which I have above remarked. I know not how you should adopt or seem to adopt the views commonly entertained by those who hate the truth, and should signify, as you do, that if the existence of sin is on the whole for the best, God must *require* it in his law. In drawing this conclusion from the common doctrine, do you not take part, though unintentionally, with the

cavilling objector, noticed by the Apostle, Rom. iii.? The Apostle's doctrine evidently was, that the unbelief of some would not defeat the benevolent purpose and promise of God respecting his people, and that whatever men might do, he would vindicate his own character, and would even take occasion from their sins to glorify his truth and all his perfections the more. Now mark how the opposer reasons from this. "But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God," that is, puts the greater lustre upon it, or displays it to greater advantage, — "what shall we say? Is not God unrighteous who taketh vengeance?" — that is, is not God unjust in punishing us for that sin, which serves as a foil to set off the glory of his righteousness, and gives occasion for brighter manifestations of his grace? But the cavilling Jew, as the Apostle represents, pursues his reasoning still further, and says: "If the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?" That is, if the veracity of God hath displayed itself to greater advantage by means of my unbelief; where is the justice of my being punished for it? "And not rather, — let us do evil that good may come?" That is, why should I not feel myself allowed and even justified in committing all manner of wickedness, to the end that more good may be done by bringing more glory to redound to God?

If the interpretation which I have given of these passages is correct; (and it agrees with that given by the most learned and pious Expositors, and is indeed the only one which admits of any rational support;) then, so far as I can see, the case stands thus: the caviller objects, that if, according to the doctrine of Paul, sin conduces to the glory of God, (and so to the greatest good,) it is unjust that he should be condemned or punished for it; and you, on your part, object to the common doctrine of the orthodox, which I take to be the same as that of the Apostle, and you say, or seem to say, that if the sin of man is on the whole for the best, it ought not only to be exempt from punishment, but even *required* by the divine law. (See Appendix, 3—7.)

I find that I have met the objection which you urge against the

common doctrine in somewhat the same manner with Scott. In his note on Rom. 3: 5—8, he says: "God will take occasion from the rebellion of all fallen creatures to display his own glorious perfections to the greater advantage; though the intention of transgressors and the natural tendency of their conduct are both diametrically contrary to it." He then represents the objector as reasoning thus: "Suppose the truth of God should be more abundantly manifested to his glory by any man's telling a lie; why should the liar be punished for giving occasion to the display of God's glory?" "Yet," he says, "every one must see that the lie thus told, was directly *contrary* to the truth of God, and merely the *occasion* of his displaying it; and the event could not deduct from the malignity of the lie." Again, he says: "The blame of men's sins belongs only to themselves; the honor of the good done by occasion of them, to God alone."*

You have doubtless noticed the manner in which the Apostle meets the objection of the captious Jew. So far from allowing it to have any force, he seems scarcely to think it deserving of a sober refutation; and instead of spending time upon it, he dismisses it at once, after having put upon it the mark of absurdity and blasphemy.

I am well aware that you attach special importance to your scheme of thought, because you suppose that, by means of it, you avoid objections and difficulties. But I am unable to see how you avoid them. The same objection may, I think, be urged against you, as you urge against others. You hold that the existence and punishment of sin have an influence, without which no moral beings could be preserved in a state of rectitude, — an influence *indispensable* to the persevering holiness of any intelligent creatures, and of course indispensable to the highest good of the universe. The objector may say; *if so, then why does not a benevolent God*

* "A malignant persecutor — exterminates a number of Christians; and God makes the blood of the martyrs the seed of the church. But be it always remembered, that *the evil doer* will have no benefit of God's overruling action. As to *him*, the thing will always be such as the intention was. He will not be allowed to plead, — good has, according to God's own judgment, resulted, — let it go to my account." — John Foster's Lectures, published 1847.

require sin in his law?" You hold, "that God decrees all actual events, sin not excepted;" that "he really purposes the existence of sin." The objector says; *if so, then why does not God require it of his creatures? Why does he not require of at least a part of them, that which, for wise and good ends, he purposes shall exist? Why does he not require it in the same sense in which he decrees it? And why does he not require us to execute that benevolent decree which appoints sin, by committing sin?* To these questions, which are nearly of the same import with those which you suggest respecting the common theory, you will, if I mistake not, find it quite as difficult to give an answer on your scheme, as we on ours.

As to the opinion which seems to hold so prominent a place in your mind, that if God considered the existence of sin to be on the whole for the best, he could not, consistently with his sincerity, *forbid* it; — it is clear that you may just as well say, if he considered sin to be on the whole for the best, he could not consistently *punish* it; — (because he makes the same expression of his mind in *punishing* sin as he does in *forbidding* it.) Whereas, according to your own statement, the salutary influence of sin results from its punishment. But it results as really from its being *forbidden*, as from its being *punished*. And its being *forbidden* is so far from having any inconsistency with its being on the whole for the best, that it cannot *be* for the best, — cannot possibly have the good influence which God intends it shall have, without being *forbidden*, any more than it can without being *punished*.

You say, (Appendix, 5,) "It is extensively maintained that virtue is founded in utility; that is, that such is the nature, relations, and tendencies of things, that greater happiness will result from virtue or holiness, than from vice or sin. How then can sin in the nature of things be the necessary means of the greatest good?" But as various representations of yours imply, that sin *is* the necessary means of the greatest good; it belongs to you, as much as to your brethren, to show how it can be so. But the sentence above quoted overlooks a point of special importance.

When we represent sin to be the means of the greatest good; the representation cannot be supposed to relate to the good of the individuals who commit it and endure its penalty, but to the good of other beings, who are benefited by witnessing its pernicious effects upon those individuals. Your question then appears to have no force. For suppose it to be the case, as it certainly is, that more happiness will result from holiness to those who are holy, than from sin to those who are sinners; may not the loss of sinners in such a case be the means of good to other moral beings who witness it? But you and your Reviewer have said so much as to the vast importance and the indispensable necessity of this kind of influence in a moral system, that I need not enlarge upon it here.

Let me say again, that it certainly becomes us, weak and ignorant as we are, to remember that this is a profound and mysterious subject, and to guard against hastily embracing any views of God's character and works, different from those which have been embraced by the wisest and holiest of men in all ages. I cannot but feel that my best views of the eternal God are exceedingly obscure, and fall infinitely below his supreme majesty and glory, and that I have great reason to make it my daily study and prayer, that I may rise to clearer and worthier conceptions of his invisible and incomprehensible excellence. Oh! come the blessed day, when the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shall shine more clearly in our hearts!

There is one passage in your note, (Appendix, 16,) at which I have been not a little surprised and grieved. In reference to those who embrace different opinions from yours, and in justification of your own theory, you say: "God may as really purpose sin, though wholly an evil, considered as incidental, so far as his power of prevention is concerned, to the best moral system, as purpose it *considered as so excellent in its nature and relations*, as to be the necessary means of the greatest good." Now, Dear Brother, who holds the opinion which you here oppose, and which you put in contrast with your own? Who among all the ministers and friends of Christ, especially among the orthodox ministers and

Christians in this country, ever entertained an opinion so impious and shocking, as that God considered sin as "*excellent in its nature and relations*," or purposed it *as such?* Such a sentiment, I am bold to say, can be found in no orthodox writer, and must be instantly repelled by every pious heart. Why then do you use language which certainly implies, that this opinion is held by those from whom you differ? If you really mean to convey this impression, then I am constrained to say, that no calumniator of the orthodox ever charged them more injuriously.

If you justify yourself by urging, that the *opinion* or *reasoning* of those from whom you differ, implies that sin is "excellent in its nature and relations," and that God considers it as such; my reply is, that their opinion or reasoning no more implies this, than yours. The only ground you can have for supposing that our opinions imply, *that sin is excellent in its nature and relations*, is our belief that, under the divine government, it is made the means of the greatest good. But this is clearly a belief which you entertain, or seem to entertain, as really as any of your brethren, and which you express more strongly and absolutely, than is common with them. Where is the justice then of the language, against which I have above protested? As it now stands, we feel it to be a total and very wounding misrepresentation.

You ask, (Appendix, 6,) "If sin is the necessary means of the greatest good, who can regard the commission of it with sorrow, or even regret?" To this I reply, that sorrow for sin is as consistent on the common principle, as on yours. You think that sin is incidental to the best moral system; that no moral beings could be preserved in holiness without the influence arising from it; and that God purposes its existence considered in this light. On this ground you are met by the opposer with the same objection, which you urge against the common doctrine. If sin is incidental to the best system, and if, without its influence, no moral beings could be preserved in holiness; who then, he says, can regard the commission of it with sorrow, or even with regret? "What benevolent being, duly informed, can ingenuously regret, that in sinning he has" done that which was incidental to the

best moral system, and has put it into the power of God to produce an influence, without which he could not secure the holiness of any moral beings? Surely the act of sin, considered simply as incidental to the best system, and as having an influence so essential to the continued holiness of moral beings, "is not a matter of regret," this being the very reason why God is supposed to "purpose it."

The difficulty too of reconciling sorrow for sin with the doctrine, *that God purposes its existence*, is as great on your scheme, as on the one you oppose. If, for any reasons whatever, God has purposed the existence of sin; why, the objector may say, should we regret its existence? Why not be satisfied with it for the very same reasons, which induced God to purpose it?

But I can see no real difficulty of this kind on either plan. And if by undue and misguided speculation, any one should so far obliterate the distinction between good and evil, as to regard them both in the same light, and with equal approbation, because God makes them both conduce to the same end; let an appeal be made to his moral nature, which, unless strangely perverted, must lead him to approve of what is right, and, in spite of any speculations to the contrary, to disapprove of what is wrong. Before any one could look upon it as "a matter of grateful praise that he had sinned," his conscience must be wholly subverted. And if any one should put your question, "If sin be the necessary means of the greatest good, who can reasonably regard the commission of it with sorrow or even regret;" I should think it sufficient to refer him to the law written on his heart. Equally convincing must be an appeal from so baseless a speculation to the divine government. For what God forbids in his law, he punishes in his administration. Now when the sinner feels, in his inmost soul, that sin is "an evil and bitter thing," and condemns it as "exceedingly sinful;" and when he finds his judgment of it confirmed by the word and providence of God; he will be in no danger of thinking it "a matter of grateful praise that he has committed it," even though he should be apprized that God will make it the means of the greatest good. The knowledge of the fact, that God will accomplish

good by means of sin, could not in the least alter his judgment respecting its intrinsic nature.

If we would act like reasonable beings, we must regard sin as it is *in itself*. God regards it in this manner, as we learn from his law and government. First, he *forbids* it; then *punishes* it. As moral and accountable beings, we are to look upon sin, and are concerned with it, just as it is exhibited in God's law, and in his moral administration. And in both these it is exhibited, as unspeakably criminal and hateful. The good secured comes not properly from *sin*, but from *God;* not from the sinner's act in *committing* it, but from God's act in *punishing* it; not from the *violation* of the law on man's part, but from the *vindication* of it on God's part. The fact that God accomplishes good by means of sin, is a matter of joy to all holy beings. But his agency in overruling sin for good is entirely different from the sinner's agency in committing it. The one is holy; the other is unholy; and they are thus, in their nature and tendency, totally opposite. So that we cannot approve of God's agency in accomplishing the good, without disapproving of the sinner's agency in committing the evil. If we love the good accomplished, we must abhor the sinful conduct which was intended to oppose it. And no ingenuous, unsophisticated mind could ever feel less sorrow for having transgressed the law, because he knew that the law would be vindicated by its divine Author, and even honored the more by occasion of the transgression. The feelings of sorrow here mentioned must, I am sure, be acknowledged by all to be just and proper. And it must be equally just and proper that from the depths of humiliation and penitential sorrow, we should lift up our eyes and admire the perfect government of God. When true believers see that he treats sin in such a manner, as to show its evil nature and his infinite abhorrence of it; that by his administration, he not only prevents the hurtful consequences which would naturally flow from it, but makes it the means of good to the universe; they ought to feel, and do feel, a cordial approbation and pleasure. If we are holy, we shall forever rejoice in this benevolent, almighty government of God, without having our abhorrence of sin in the least diminished.

I cannot but think that the distinction above made is perfectly plain between the agency of God in his righteous government, and the agency of man in his disobedience; between the good which directly results from God's perfect administration, and the evil which would naturally result from sin. And to be consistent, and to regard things as they are, we must approve of the conduct of God, which is holy, and disapprove of our own conduct, which is sinful; must rejoice in the one, and feel sorrow and shame for the other. Hence we perceive the obvious consistency of regret and sorrow for sin with the full persuasion that God will make use of it as the means of accomplishing the greatest good.

While speaking of the assumption which you oppose, and after remarking that the law of God, *according to this assumption*, is no proof, that transgression is not on the whole for the best, you say, (Appendix, 7); "Indeed the subject" (the moral agent, the subject of law) "knows, that all sin will prove to be the necessary means of the greatest good; how then does it appear, that with this knowledge he is not benevolent in performing the deed?" To so strange a question as this, I hardly know how to frame a serious answer. The deed in question is by supposition a sinful one, performed, as you concede, with a selfish and sinful intention; and yet you ask, "how it appears that the subject is not truly benevolent in performing it;" which is equivalent to asking, how it appears that a man is not benevolent in performing a deed of malevolence. And this is nowise different from asking, how it appears that love is not hatred, that holiness is not sin, or that any one thing is not its opposite. The action, I repeat it, is, by supposition, *selfish and sinful*, receiving its name from the intention with which it is performed. Now what is the reason which leads you to change the denomination of the action, and to speak of it as benevolent? Is the nature of the action, or any one of its attributes changed? No. Is the intention with which it was performed different? No. What reason then do you assign for applying to a sinful deed, performed with a selfish intention, so unusual an epithet as *benevolent?* Why "the subject is apprized of the utility of the deed," and this circumstance makes the dif-

ference. *A* SELFISH *deed, then, if only performed with the knowledge of its utility, may properly be denominated* BENEVOLENT! — a singular method of denominating moral actions; according to which they would be called good or bad, benevolent or selfish, not from the intention with which they are performed, but from the knowledge which the agent has of their results! This knowledge of the useful results of a sinful action seems in your view to infuse into it a certain quality, which counteracts the quality infused by the intention of the agent, and makes a benevolent deed of a selfish one. Yea, this knowledge of the results of a sinful action appears in your view to possess such wonderful virtue, that it transmutes the *intention itself*, with which the action is performed, from evil to good; for you very soberly inquire, how it appears, that in this action, (this sinful action,) the agent "*did not really intend good?*" Why, methinks it appears from the fact, *that he really intended evil.*

The distinction between the wicked intention of sinners, and the benevolent intention of God to overrule their conduct for good, is exhibited in many examples mentioned in the Scriptures. Joseph said to his brethren, in reference to their envious and wicked conduct towards him, "As for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it for good."

But this point may be illustrated in the most striking manner by *the crucifixion of Christ.* This was an event which God "determined before to be done," and which he had clearly made known in his word as the appointed means of the highest glory to his name, and of the richest blessings to our race. And yet the act of those who crucified Christ, is represented as preëminently sinful. "With *wicked* hands they crucified the Son of God." Of course, their conduct was, as Peter represented it, a proper subject of penitential sorrow.

Let me now state, very briefly, what would seem to be the fair results of your theory, when applied to this example. If I mistake not, you would be led by your views to say, that the crucifixion of Christ, being undoubtedly designed by God for the greatest good of the universe, should have been made the subject of divine

precept, and that his enemies should have been required to crucify him. If they were ignorant of the good to be accomplished by this event; then you would say, the guilt of their sinful deed could not be great, being "occasioned by deception on the part of the Legislator," who had neglected to inform them of the happy results of their conduct. And if they had understood, as they ought, what the Scriptures had revealed respecting the death of the Messiah as the necessary means of salvation to sinners, and so "had been fully apprized of the utility of the deed;" then you would say, "with this knowledge, they must have been truly benevolent in performing the deed." So far from suspecting that this knowledge would have roused their enmity the more, you would think that "their interest and duty would now have been coincident;" that is, that they would not only have been instigated by their selfish interests, but bound in conscience, to crucify the Saviour. And finally, you would say, that the perpetrators of the death of Christ, when duly informed of the good to result from it, so far from feeling sorrow and regret, ought to make it "a subject of grateful praise that they had committed this sin," and "thus furnished the necessary means of the greatest good." (Appendix, 3—7.)

Permit me to say, in conclusion, that I have no language to express what I feel in view of your remarks in this part of your note. If by any just explanation, they can be made consistent with the word of God, and with the common apprehensions of enlightened Christians, I shall sincerely rejoice.

LETTER VIII.*

Reverend and Dear Sir,

I do not consider it proper for me in this place particularly to remark upon the passage of Scripture, in which God offers eternal life to sinners, and solicits them to accept it. Although I am far from agreeing with you as to some of the inferences which you draw from these passages; yet I maintain as fully as you do, the perfect sincerity of God in all the declarations he makes of his love, and compassion, and willingness to save; and I deem it of great importance to the souls of men, that the obvious views of God's character, which are exhibited in the numerous passages referred to, should be most seriously and earnestly inculcated from the pulpit. These impressive and melting representations of the

* In my recent perusal of these Letters, I have made it a serious inquiry, whether there was anything in the matter or spirit of them, which ought to be corrected. The result has been, that I have felt an increased confidence in the soundness of the principles advanced, and in the strength of the considerations urged in their support; though I am convinced that the principles might be stated more clearly, and the considerations urged with more power and skill. As to the *spirit* of the Letters, or the *manner* in which they were written, I have been less confident. I was led to doubt on this subject by the remarks made in the Christian Spectator immediately after the publication of the Letters. The Editors think the Letters are pervaded by great "personal incivility." On the other hand, the Editors of the London Eclectic Review, who were distant from us, and not liable to the influence of personal considerations, thought proper to say of the Letters: — "They afford an excellent example of the close and pressing pursuit of an antagonist without (as we can conceive) the slightest improper feeling. There is no vaunting, no contempt, no anathemas." After all, I must frankly say, that if I were now to undertake the business of re-writing the Letters, I could, as I think, make some valuable improvements, and could avoid those things in the *manner*, which have been thought exceptionable. But in present circumstances, especially as the Letters are matters of history as well as subjects of controversy, I do not feel at liberty to re-model them; and I can only say that, if there is even an appearance of personal incivility or disrespect, it was not intended, and is sincerely regretted.

divine goodness, so often and so variously made in the Scriptures, I would hold fast for my own benefit, and exhibit for the benefit of others, though, in a speculative view, they were attended with far greater difficulties than they are.

Before closing, I have thought it proper to touch upon the practical influence of your opinions, compared with the common opinions of the orthodox.

1. As to *divine power*. The common theory ascribes to God a power which is strictly infinite, and which enables him to do all his pleasure, all which on the whole he chooses or sees to be best to do. But your theory, as we understand it, implies that there is a vast amount of good which God on the whole desires and chooses to effect, but which he cannot effect; that another system is supposable, (a system free from evil,) which God greatly preferred to the present system, seeing it to be on the whole far better, which yet he could not adopt: — an obvious limitation of divine power.

2. As to *the divine blessedness*. The common theory represents God as perfectly and infinitely happy in the enjoyment of his own immutable excellence, and in the accomplishment of a good which will fully satisfy his unbounded benevolence. But according to your theory, a part of the good which God on the whole desires to accomplish, is not accomplished, and so his benevolence fails of being perfectly satisfied. Now if an intelligent being can be completely happy, who on the whole has strong desires which can never be satisfied, or who wishes to accomplish an amount of good which he never can accomplish; then I know not what complete happiness is.

3. As to *the moral system*. The common theory implies, that God's system, considered in its whole extent and duration, is the best of all the systems of which his infinite mind conceived; at least, that there was no conceivable system which he considered better than this. But if I understand your language, the highest honor which you bestow upon the system which God has adopted, is to assert, that God saw it to be better than no moral system at all; while there were many systems conceivable, which should

either be entirely free from evil, or have a less degree of it than the present, all of which were really better on the whole, and better in God's view, than the one he has adopted. Thus the common theory seems to imply much more honorable conceptions of the system of God's works, than the theory which you have advanced.

4. As to *the extent of God's dominion.* It is the common belief of the orthodox, that God's dominion is unlimited; that he rules all things in heaven and earth, and directs all events; that without doing the least violence to moral agency, he exercises a perfect control over the feelings and actions of moral agents; that, although he is under no obligation to his creatures to preserve them in a state of holiness, or to make them holy if they are sinful, he can, whenever he on the whole chooses, sanctify the unholy, and preserve the holy; and that there is nothing which can hinder him from doing this universally, but the dictate of his own sovereign will, or, the determination of his own infinite and unsearchable wisdom respecting the great interests of his empire. But your theory, if I understand it, does not admit that God thus ruleth over all, and doeth all his pleasure. It represents God's control over moral agents, which is infinitely the most important part of his dominion, to be limited, so that he cannot influence them to do that which on the whole he wishes to influence them to do, and which he sees to be most for his glory and the good of the universe. It represents that the very nature, which God has given to moral agents, necessarily limits his voluntary power over them, and prevents him from giving such a direction to their moral actions as he wishes to give, and would give if he could. It will be easy for those who are accustomed to think, to determine whether these views or the common ones best accord with what the Bible teaches, as to the unlimited and uncontrollable dominion of God over the works of his hand, and particularly over moral agents.

5. As to *the happiness of the good.* It is the joy of Christians that God reigns, and reigns universally and forever; that he governs all things, especially in the moral world, after the counsel of

his own will. But for them to admit that the operation of God's power is in any way restrained, except by his own perfect wisdom and goodness, or that his wise and holy sovereignty is by any cause whatever so limited, that he cannot accomplish what on the whole he wishes to accomplish, would damp their joy. Their feelings would agree with the feelings of God in preferring another plan to the present, and in regretting that the plan which was really and on the whole preferable, could not be adopted. It would be particularly distressing to them to indulge the thought, that the sovereign grace of God is so limited by free agency, that he cannot "have mercy on whom he will have mercy," and cannot turn sinners from the error of their ways, when it seems good in his sight.

6. As to *submission*. According to the common theory, entire submission to God is a reasonable and delightful duty. We know that God doeth all things well, because he doeth all his pleasure. Our submission is the submission of ignorance to infinite knowledge; of weakness to infinite power; of benevolence which is imperfect and feeble, to that which is perfect and boundless. Our submission is only a cheerful willingness, that all our affairs and the affairs of the world should be conducted as unerring wisdom sees to be best. Submission on your scheme may have the same character with this, so far as the divine control extends, and events are ordered as God sees to be on the whole best. But beyond this there is, on your scheme, a wide range, even the whole field of moral agency. Here our submission must be mingled with pain and regret; because it is submission to a system, which God sees to be on the whole less desirable and excellent, than some other, — submission to an immeasurable evil, which God, all things considered, wishes to prevent, but cannot. Must not submission, regulated by such views, arise rather from an unwelcome necessity, than from choice?

7. As to *prayer*. The common theory encourages us to make known our requests to God with great freedom, and with the assurance, that he is able to do all that we ask or think, and more; and that he will grant us our petitions, if consistent with his infi-

nite wisdom and goodness. But your theory would give this peculiarity to prayer, namely, that whenever we request God to do anything for us or for others, in the way of sanctifying the heart and directing the moral affections and actions, we must feel that we are in danger of asking favors which God has no power to bestow, however he may wish to bestow them. The difference between the two theories as to their practical influence in this respect, must be obvious to every Christian.

8. As to *humility* and *dependence on divine grace.* The common theory leads us to entertain low thoughts of ourselves, especially in a moral view, and to feel that we are not of ourselves sufficient for anything spiritually good, and that, for whatever holiness we now possess, or may hereafter attain, we are dependent on divine grace; and thus it prepares us for entire trust in God, for constant prayer, and fervent gratitude. But your theory, which asserts continually and in terms so emphatical, the doctrine of human power, even, as it would seem, at the expense of the doctrine of divine power, is likely, if I mistake not, to produce a very different effect. In the representations which you and others make on this subject, and which are, in language at least, at variance with the Scriptures, I cannot but apprehend a tendency to cherish in the heart a feeling of independence and self-sufficiency. Would it not be natural for us to ask, why we should seek that help of God, which is not necessary, and without which we are able to work out our own salvation, and have in ourselves a sufficiency for all the purposes of a holy life? I do not charge you or those who adopt your theory, with having feelings of this kind yourselves, or with designedly promoting them in others, nor even with having any views in your own minds, which would naturally lead to such a consequence. And I would by no means have you infer from any remarks I have made, that I differ at all from the generality of ministers in New England respecting the natural powers and faculties of man, as a moral and accountable being, a proper subject of law. But the unqualified language which you sometimes employ respecting the natural state, the free will and the power of man, the nature and necessity of divine in-

fluence, the manner of regeneration, and other points allied to these, is not, I apprehend, in accordance either with the letter or the spirit of revelation, and will have an unpropitious influence upon the characters of men, upon the revivals of religion, and upon all the interests of the church.

Now you cannot surely think it strange, that serious disquietude and alarm should exist among us in consequence of what you have published in relation to these subjects. For you well know that Calvinists, though not afraid of free discussion, are sincerely and firmly attached to their articles of faith, and are not apt to be carried about with the changing opinions of others. Whether right or wrong, we have been accustomed to consider the controversy which early arose in the church between the orthodox and Pelagians, and which was continued between the Calvinists and the Arminians or Remonstrants, as of radical importance. Now how would you expect us to feel, and with our convictions, how ought we to feel, when a brother, who has professed to be decidedly orthodox and has had our entire confidence, and is placed at the head of one of our Theological Schools, makes an attack upon several of the articles of our faith, and employs language on the subject of moral agency, free will, depravity, divine influence, etc. which is so like the language of Arminians and Pelagians, that it would require some labor to discover the difference? And how would it be natural for us to feel, when such a brother adopts, on several controverted subjects, the language and the opinions which have been adopted by Unitarians; and when we find that Unitarians themselves understand him as agreeing with them, and are making such agreement a subject of exultation? Would it not betray an indifference and remissness in us, which you would think unaccountable, if such things excited no solicitude in us respecting the cause which ought ever to be dearest to our hearts? And shall I ask again, how ought we to feel, when we find a remarkable resemblance between your mode of thinking on one of the subjects of the present discussion, and that of free thinkers? Rousseau says;* "If man is active and free, he acts of himself.

* Confession of faith in "Emile."

Providence does not hinder him from doing evil, either because the evil which so feeble a being as man can perform is nothing in his eyes, or because he could not hinder it without restraining our liberty, and thus doing a greater evil by degrading our nature. We are placed upon the earth, and endowed with liberty, tempted by passion, and restrained by conscience. What more could divine power itself do for us? Could it put contradiction in our nature, and pay the price of well-doing to one who had not been able to do ill? What! in order to prevent man from being wicked, must God confine him to instinct, and make him a beast?" This eloquent writer says in another place;* "Man, be patient. The evils you suffer are a necessary effect of nature. The eternal and beneficent Being would have been glad to exempt you from them. The reason why he has not done better, is, that he *could* not." Again. "Why wish to vindicate the divine power at the expense of the divine goodness?" And again. "The question is not, whether we do or do not suffer; but whether it was well for the universe to exist, and whether the ills which we endure are not inevitable to its constitution."

I have not adverted to this noticeable agreement in phraseology and in reasoning between you and those I have mentioned, for the purpose of stigmatizing your theory, or as a proof that it is erroneous. For Rousseau might have, and, in many respects, evidently had very just conceptions on moral and religious subjects. And so had the Pelagians and Arminians. But when we find you, on several interesting points, siding with these sects against the orthodox, and siding too with Dr. John Taylor against Edwards on some of the main questions at issue between them; and when in addition to this, we find you on some points coinciding so nearly with the views of the French philosophers, and, shall I say, on other points throwing out the very objections, which we have so often heard from cavillers against orthodoxy; it would certainly be strange, if none of our sensibilities were touched, and no concern or fear excited in regard to the tendency of your speculations. I acknowledge that on this whole

* Letter to Voltaire respecting his poem on the destruction of Lisbon.

subject we may be mistaken; and that our fear may be groundless. And we will be anxiously looking for evidence to satisfy us that it is so. To such evidence we will open every avenue to our understandings and hearts. But I feel myself constrained to say, that the theory which you adopt in contradistinction to the common theory, appears to me, generally, so far as I understand it, to be unscriptural, and of dangerous tendency. And the more I examine it, the further I am from being satisfied with it. And this is the case with the orthodox community to an extent, as I have reason to think, far beyond your apprehension. Compared with the whole body of Congregational and Presbyterian ministers, there are very few who embrace your opinions; and, though my knowledge may be defective, yet among all the Professors of our Theological Seminaries, and Presidents of our Colleges, I do not know one whose views coincide with yours. But although such has been the case with me and with my brethren in the sacred office generally, we have been slow, perhaps too slow, to make a public declaration of our dissent. So far have we been from acting the part of *assailants*, that we have been very reluctant to come even to the work of *self-defence*. The attack which you have made upon our faith, and the common faith of the Reformed churches in Europe and America, it might have been expected we should instantly endeavor to repel. But of any forwardness on our part to do this, you cannot complain; least of all can you complain of this in me. I have waited to learn what God would have me to do, and to have the path of duty made plain. I have waited to see whether the counsels and entreaties of some of your most valued and intimate friends would have any influence to check your ardor, and restrain you from what I considered hazardous to the peace of the churches. I have waited also to obtain more light concerning your opinions, and have hoped that the difference between you and your brethren would prove to be rather in appearance than in reality, and that the necessity of controversy might still be avoided. In the mean time, you and your associates have been intent upon your object, and by preaching, and conversation, and pamphlets, and especially by a popular

Periodical, have been zealously laboring to propagate your tenets. At length, in conformity with the wishes of many far and near, I have been induced to unite with those respected ministers who have preceded me, not, be it remembered, in making an attack upon you, as has been very incautiously said, but in repelling your attack upon us and our brethren, and in defending our common and long established faith against what we conceive to be innovation and error. I most heartily regret the introduction of a controversy, which may turn off the minds of many from the great interests of religion, fill our churches with strife, and hinder the spread of the gospel. But for the evils of such a controversy, who is to be responsible?

Excuse me, Dear Brother, for the length of these Letters, and for the freedom with which I have addressed you. If I have shown any want of fairness, or of brotherly love, or have done the least thing which can be a just cause of offence to you or to others, I shall remember it with sorrow and shame. If, after all the efforts I have made, I have misapprehended the true sense of the passages in your sermon to which I have attended; I shall hope for such explanation from you, as will effectually correct my mistake. And you will keep in mind that the mistake, if there is one, exists among your readers extensively. Do you not owe it then to the public, to give a clear, unambiguous, and full exhibition of the peculiarities of your system, so that there may no longer be any complaint of obscurity, or any suspicion of concealment? If it be true that your system agrees with that of Edwards and Dwight, and New England ministers generally; the public should be satisfied of this. Or if a new system is to be introduced, and a new sect formed, with a new name, and new measures to extend itself, and a new and separate interest; then the public ought to have the means of understanding exactly what the new system is, and what is to be the new sect. The difficulty lies not at all between you and me personally, but between you and the Christian community. And if you will in any way satisfy them, that you do not entertain the views which have been imputed to you; if you will satisfy them, that you agree in your

doctrinal belief, as you profess to do, with Edwards and Dwight; I and others shall have nothing more to do, but to testify our joy that our mistake has been corrected, and our entire confidence in you restored; and so the whole matter may come at once to a happy termination.

But in order to bring about this happy result, there is evidently something for you to do. And it is my prayer to the God of truth, that whatever you may undertake with a view to such a result, you may have his gracious presence and assistance. And as I have an utter dislike to controversy, especially with a beloved brother, and shall wish to have no further occasion to turn aside from the duties of my office to pursue this discussion; I will here, in this closing Letter, open my heart to you without any reserve, not to dictate to you, or bring forward any demands, but to make a few requests, and to suggest what I think the interests of religion require of you, and of every other man, engaged in a public discussion like this, and what the Christian community in the present case will feel themselves entitled to expect.

In the *first* place, permit me to say a word in regard to the symptoms of excitement which you have shown, and your readiness, and that of your associates, to make complaints against those from whom you differ. I beg you to look a moment at the case just as it is. An individual comes forward to express his dissent from several doctrines, which have always been held sacred by the churches of the Reformation, especially by the orthodox in this country. Now in what manner should we naturally expect him to proceed? We might look for a manly freedom, and even boldness, in the declaration of his opinions; and this might entitle him to our respect; but should we look for expressions of uncandidness and severity towards his brethren? We might expect him to state the reasons of his own belief clearly and strongly. But should we expect a forwardness in him to bring complaints against those who still maintained the common doctrines, and to assault them with other weapons than sober argument, and the sword of the spirit which is the word of God? These common doctrines, it is well known, are very dear to those who believe them, being

intimately associated with their most devout affections, their hopes, and their joys. Could it be supposed that they would readily give them up as things of no value? Could it be expected, that the sons of the Puritans would quickly surrender to a single assailant those precious truths, which had been so often defended against the attacks of an host? I beseech you, my Brother, to review this matter as it has been from the beginning, and consider whether you have not, in some respects, erred in judgment, been too hasty in your proceedings, too confident of success, and too impatient of contradiction; and whether you have not assumed an attitude before the public, not altogether befitting you? In such circumstances, ought not every man to take care to cherish and exhibit great caution and candor, forbearance and gentleness? I hope you will pardon me for saying what many have thought, but few perhaps would be likely to express to you.

Secondly. As you have been charged with being so unintelligible, and readers generally have found it so difficult to understand what your theory is, we wish you to aim at great plainness and perspicuity, and to make everything you write as intelligible as possible.

Thirdly. As there is a pretty extensive impression, that you have gone beyond what propriety would admit in your professions of agreement with Calvinistic writers, and particularly that you have made quotations from the writings of Edwards and Dwight in the manner of one who has a favorite point to carry, and that your reasoning has too much the appearance of what is called *special pleading;* it would seem very desirable that in what you have further to say on this point, you should be sure to exhibit perfect fairness and impartiality. And here permit me to say, that the statements made in No. 6 of "VIEWS IN THEOLOGY," will demand your particular consideration. Many of your brethren will be somewhat impatient to see your reply to the reasoning found in that pamphlet.

Fourthly. I well know that a man with a mind as active as yours, as adroit in controversy, and urged on by as powerful an impulse, can write as much and as long as he chooses on any sub-

ject, especially on such a subject as this. But it will naturally be a question with you and with me, how much time men who are busy in their callings, will think proper to take from other duties to examine such matters as these. Now instead of carrying this discussion into a great variety of pamphlets and Reviews, and spreading it out over a long period of time, will it not be advisable for you, the next time you write, to make thorough work, and in one publication, honored with your own name, to bring out the whole to public view?

As to the subjects of discussion introduced in these Letters, I hope you will take care not to overlook the main points. Whatever labor you may bestow upon smaller things, be careful not to pass by those which are of primary importance. You will excuse me, if I mention some of these, and suggest to you what I suppose to be necessary, on your part, to meet the circumstances of the case, and the wishes of the community.

As to the two positions, then, which you call "common but groundless assumptions," I wish to ask, what you take to be the real sentiments which your brethren mean to express by these positions; and whether you deny them in the sense in which they affirm them; or if not, in what sense you do deny them; and whether you hold the opposite; or if not, whether your belief really stops with the mere negation of the common belief?

In regard to the second position, my question is, whether your theory implies, that God *could* have prevented all sin, or the present degree of it? The question relates to moral agents actually existing; and to answer it by saying, yes, God could have prevented all sin, or the present degree of it, by not giving existence to moral beings, — would be a mere shuffle. According to your theory, was God able to prevent sin in the literal sense, (which is the first sense I have given of power,) that is, was he able to do it, if on the whole he had chosen to do it?

As you appear to hold that God *could not* prevent sin in the third sense I have given, will you inform us wherein you suppose the impossibility or absurdity consists? also whether you consider it impossible or absurd in all cases alike for God to prevent sin?

and if not, then what makes the difference? And if the prevention of sin is impossible in this sense, that is, absurd and contradictory, then in what sense is such prevention of sin an object of God's desire or choice?

Will you inform us definitely what you mean by the *nature of things*, and in what sense and degree you suppose the power of God limited by it?

As the nature of moral agency is much concerned with this discussion; will you give us your views of it very particularly? Do you consider it to be such, that it is wholly or in part beyond the power of God to direct and control it as he chooses? If you say, partly, but not wholly; then tell us why it is not as really an infringement upon moral agency, for God to control it in part, as wholly? If you hold that God cannot control moral agency in all cases, though he can in some; then, why not in all as well as in some? Also, how far does God direct events in the natural, social, and civil world?

You will gratify us by showing very clearly and particularly, what that is in the nature of moral agents, which you suppose makes it impossible for God to form their characters and direct their actions according to his own pleasure? Is it any particular faculty, or attribute; or their whole nature taken in one general view?

If God can exert no influence on the minds of men, except by rational motives, can he make that influence effectual to sway their hearts, whenever he pleases?

We shall wish to know, whether your theory implies, as many have supposed it does, that God has so made moral agents that they are *independent* of him, as to their moral feelings and actions? If you hold that moral agents, as such, are dependent on God; then, how far, and in what respects are they so?

As this discussion is intimately connected with the doctrine of divine influence; we shall be gratified to know what your theory is in respect to that doctrine. You speak of the influence of the Spirit in regeneration as supernatural. Will you inform us in what sense you use the word supernatural? why such influence is

necessary? and whether the Spirit of God in regeneration has a direct influence on the mind itself?

As many have understood you to agree substantially with the Pelagians, and particularly with Dr. John Taylor, in regard to the natural state of man, free will, and conversion; will you inform us whether and how far this is the case?

And as many have doubted whether you maintain the doctrine of divine decrees and divine sovereignty in the sense in which it is commonly maintained by the orthodox; will you inform us on this subject?

Is your theory of moral agency the same as that which Edwards maintained in his treatise on the Will?

I have understood you as holding, that God could not have done better than he has for any individual moral agent, and of course that he could not have converted any more sinners than he has converted. Have I understood you right? If God pleased, and saw it to be on the whole best, could he convert any one, and every one, who is not converted? If not, what is the hinderance? And is that hinderance greater here, than has in other instances been overcome by the power of the Holy Spirit?

If you see faults in the reasoning in Letter VI, or if you suppose that you have been misunderstood on the points there discussed; you will particularly inform us. — Could God, according to your theory, preserve any of his creatures in a state of holiness, without the influence arising from the existence and punishment of sin?

Does your theory imply that the only choice which God had, was between the present moral system, including so much evil, and no moral system at all? or does it admit that there might have been other moral systems, and some of them excluding all evil, which were conceived by the mind of God, and to which he preferred the present system?

As the subjects treated of in Letter VII. are of a practical nature, I hope you will express your views of them with all possible plainness. The same as to the several articles in the present Letter, in which I have shown what I apprehend to be the natural influence of your theory, compared with the common one.

I earnestly hope, that you will do all in your power to remove the dissatisfaction and disquietude of your brethren far and near, and to allay their honest fears in regard to the nature and consequences of your speculations.

In replying to these Letters, you may be able to fix upon me the charge of some inadvertencies, faults in reasoning, and misconceptions of your theory. So be it. I make no claim to infallibility, especially on subjects encumbered with an obscure and ambiguous phraseology, and in some respects involved in deep mystery; and I am much further from making such a claim, than I was twenty years ago.

But in regard to the subjects now under discussion, it is my earnest wish no longer to remain in the dark, and no longer to be in danger of contending in the dark. — That the common faith of the orthodox is substantially conformed to the word of God, and will stand fast forever, I have no doubt. On the other hand, I have no doubt that in my habits of thinking and reasoning on every moral and religious subject, there is more or less of darkness and error remaining. And if you, or any other man, by a clear explanation of the Scriptures, or by any exhibition of just thought, or of powerful, conclusive argument, will do anything towards chasing away this darkness and error from my mind, and helping me better to understand divine truth; I will regard it as one of the choicest blessings that can be derived from the benevolent agency of man. *Truth is from* God, *and is ordained to be forever the sustenance and the joy of his saints.* Let us then put away all prejudice, and pride, and every hurtful passion, and unite our hearts in the fervent prayer, that the Holy Spirit may be our teacher, and that, whatever may become of this discussion, or of the particular opinions which such short-sighted, erring creatures as we are may have wished to defend, *what* God *sees to be truth may prevail.*

I am, Reverend and Dear Sir, with sincere affection and esteem, your brother,

LEONARD WOODS.

Theological Seminary, Andover,
July 30, 1830.

APPENDIX.

CONCIO AD CLERUM, pp. 28—34.

"THE universal depravity of mankind is not inconsistent with the moral perfection of God. It is not uncommon to ask, (and I admit the facts on which the objection rests,) — how could a God of perfect sincerity and goodness bring a race of creatures into existence, and give them such *a nature* that they will all certainly sin, and incur his wrath? — It is also added, to increase the weight of the objection, — why render this universal sinfulness of a race the consequence of one man's act — why not give to each a fair trial for himself? I answer, God does give to each a fair trial for himself. Not a human being does or can become thus sinful or depraved, but by his own choice. God does not compel him to sin by the *nature* he gives him. Nor is his sin although a consequence of Adam's sin, in such a sense its consequence, as not to be a free voluntary act of his own. He sins freely, voluntarily. There is no other way of sinning. God, (there is no irreverence in saying it,) can make nothing else sin, but the sinner's act.

1. "Do you then say, that God gave man a nature, which he knew would lead him to sin? — What if He did? — Do you know that God could have done better, better on the whole, or better if he gave him existence at all, *even for the individual himself?* The error lies in the gratuitous assumption, that God could have adopted a moral system, and prevented all sin, or at least, the present degree of sin. For, no man knows this — no man can

prove it. The assumption therefore is wholly unauthorised, as the basis of the present objection, and the objection itself groundless. On the supposition that the evil which exists is in respect to divine prevention, *incidental* to the best possible system, and that notwithstanding the evil, God will secure the greatest good possible to him to secure, who can impeach either his wisdom or his goodness because evil exists? I say then that as ignorance is incompetent to make an objection, and as no one knows that this supposition is not a matter of fact, no one has a right to assert the contrary, or even to think it. Suppose then God had adopted a different system, who is competent to foretell or to conjecture the results,—or even the results of one iota of change in the present system? Suppose God had made you just like Adam, or even like Lucifer, and placed you in similar circumstances, do you know that you would not have sinned as he did? How do you know that had you commenced your immortal career with such aggravated guilt, God would not have found it necessary to send you to hell without an offer of mercy, and that you would not have sunk in deeper woe than that which now awaits you?—How do you know that what might have been true respecting yourself, had not been true of any other possible system of accountable beings? How do you know, that had God ordered things otherwise than he has, this very world, now cheered with the calls of mercy and brightened with the hopes of eternal life, yea that heaven itself would not now be trembling under the thunders of retributive vengeance? Man,—man in his ignorance, alter the plan and procedure of his God! How dare he think of it? Beware, ye insects of a day, ye are judging HIM "whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain."

"Now think of this, fellow sinner. God, in adopting the present system with all the sin incidental to it, may have adopted the best possible. In giving to you the nature which he has, and in placing you in the circumstances in which he has, he may have done the best he could even for you."

"NOTE. The difficulties on this difficult subject as it is extensively regarded, result in the view of the writer from two very common but groundless assumptions

—assumptions which, so long as they are admitted and reasoned upon, *must* leave the subject involved in insuperable difficulties.

2. "The assumptions are these; First, *that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good, and as such, so far as it exists, is preferable on the whole to holiness in its stead.* Secondly, *that God could in a moral system have prevented all sin, or at least the present degree of sin.*

"In further explanation of the ground taken in answering the above objection, the following inquiries are submitted to the consideration of the candid.

3. "Is not the assumption that the degree of sin which exists, or even any degree of sin, is on the whole preferable to holiness in its stead, inconsistent alike with the benevolence and the sincerity of God? — With his benevolence. If such be the nature of God, of man, of holiness, of sin, of all things, that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good, ought it not to be made the subject of precept — would it not be, by a benevolent moral Governor? For how can it be consistent with the benevolence of a moral governor, to require of his subjects that moral conduct which is not on the whole for the best?

4. "If it be said that it is on the whole for the best that *he* should *require* it, but not on the whole for the best that *they* should *perform* it — what is this but to say that it is on the whole for the best that he should practise deception on his subjects? And what then becomes of his *sincerity?* Let us take an example or two. Who would regard the command of a parent as *sincere*, it being known that he prefers on the whole the disobedience of the child to his obedience? Who would regard the invitation of a friend as *sincere*, being fully apprized that he prefers on the whole its rejection to its acceptance? If it be said that no subjects of God have such knowledge of God's preference of sin to holiness in their own case, then the question is whether their ignorance alters *the fact;* and whether he is truly *sincere*, when he would be justly pronounced *insincere* if *the real fact were known?* Besides, after the commission of sin, the fact of such a preference, if there be one, is known. How then does the *sincerity* of God appear, when it is placed beyond a doubt by the event, that he did prefer on the whole, the sin committed by the subject to the holiness required in his law? Is it then possible that God should be sincere in his commands and invitations, unless holiness in man be on the whole preferable to sin in its stead?

5. "Further, it is extensively maintained that virtue is founded in utility, i. e. that such is the nature, relations, and tendencies of things, that greater happiness will result from virtue or holiness, than from vice or sin How then can sin in the nature of things be the necessary means of the greatest good?

6. "Again, if sin be *the necessary means* of the greatest good, who can reasonably regard the commission of it with sorrow, or even regret? What benevolent being, duly informed, can ingenuously regret that by sin he has put it in the power of God to produce greater good, than God could otherwise produce? Ought it not rather to be matter of grateful praise that he has sinned, and thus furnished, by what he has done, the necessary means of the greatest possible good? Surely the act considered simply in the relation of the necessary means of such an end, is not a matter for regret; this being the very reason why God himself is supposed to prefer it.

7. "Is it then said, that *the intention* is selfish and sinful? Be it so. Had the subject however been fully apprized of the utility of the deed, and the real preference of God, (as in the case of the destruction of the Canaanites,) his own interest and his duty would have been coincident; and how does it appear that in this case he had not performed the act from a *benevolent* intention? And how great is the guilt of a selfish intention which, for aught that appears, is occasioned by deception on the part of the lawgiver? Is it said that the selfish intention is necessary to the action as the means of good? But where is an instance in which the good educed from a sinful action is dependent on the selfish intention of the agent? Is it said, that otherwise God could not show mercy in its forgiveness? Does God then deceive his subjects in regard to the true nature and tendency of moral acts, and thus occasion their sin that he may have the glory of forgiving it? Is this the glory of his mercy? Besides, how does it appear that the subject did not really *intend* good? The law of God, according to the assumption, is no proof that transgression is not on the whole for the best; indeed the subject knows that all sin will prove to be the necessary means of the greatest good; how then does it appear that with this knowledge he was not truly benevolent in performing the deed? What reason then for sorrow or regret remains?

"The second assumption now claims our notice; viz. *that God could have prevented all sin, or at least the present degree of sin, in a moral system.*

8. "If holiness in a moral system be preferable on the whole to sin in its stead, why did not a benevolent God, were it possible to him, prevent all sin, and secure the prevalence of universal holiness? Would not a moral universe of perfect holiness, and of course of perfect happiness, be happier and better than one comprising sin and its miseries? And must not infinite benevolence accomplish all the good it can? Would not a benevolent God then, *had it been possible to him in the nature of things*, have secured the existence of universal holiness in his moral kingdom?

9. "Is the reader startled by an enquiry which seems to limit the power of God? But does not *he* equally limit the power of God by supposing, or rather affirming, that God COULD NOT secure the greatest good without the existence of sin? On either supposition there is what may be called a limitation of the power of God by *the nature of things.* In one case, the limitation is supposed to result from the nature of sin; in the other, from *the nature of moral agency.* If then one of these suppositions *must* be made, which is the most honorable to God?

10. "Further, does not he who is startled by this supposition, limit *the goodness* of God? Undeniably he does, if it be conceded that holiness is on the whole preferable to sin in its stead. For he who admits this, and maintains that God *could* have secured the existence of holiness instead of sin, must also admit that God is not good enough to accomplish all the good in his power; not good enough to prevent the worst of evils. And who does most reverence to God, he who supposes that God *would* have prevented all sin in his moral universe, but *could* not, or he who affirms that he *could* have prevented it, but *would* not? Or is it more honorable to God to suppose that such is the nature of sin, that he *could not* accomplish

the highest good without it, than to suppose that such is the nature of *free agency* that God *could not* wholly prevent its perversion?

11. "But the main inquiry on this point remains,—does the supposition that God could not prevent sin in a moral system, limit his power at all? To suppose or affirm that God cannot perform what is *impossible in the nature of things*, is not properly to limit his power. Is there then the least particle of evidence, that the entire prevention of sin in moral beings is possible to God in the nature of things? If not, then what becomes of the very common assumption of such possibility?

12. "All evidence of the truth of this assumption must be derived either from *the nature of the subject*, or from *known facts*. Is there such evidence from *the nature of the subject?* It is here to be remarked, that the prevention of sin by any influence that destroys the *power to sin*, destroys moral agency. Moral agents then must possess the *power to sin*. Who then can prove *a priori* or from the nature of the subject, *that a being who* CAN *sin, will* NOT *sin?* How can it be proved *a priori* or from the nature of the subject, that a thing *will not be*, when for aught that appears, it *may* be? On this point, is it presumptuous to bid defiance to the powers of human reason?

13. "Is there any evidence from *facts?* Facts, so far as they are known to us, furnish no support to the assumption, that God could in a moral system prevent all sin, or even the present degree of sin. For we know of no creature of God, whose holiness is secured without that influence which results either directly or indirectly, from the existence of sin and its punishment. How then can it be shown *from facts*, that God could secure any of his moral creatures in holiness, without this influence; or to what purpose is it to allege instances of the prevention of sin *under* this influence, to prove that God could prevent it *without* this influence? Rather, do not all known facts furnish a strong presumption to the contrary? *If God could prevent all sin without this influence, why has he not done it?* Be this however as it may, since God has not, so far as we know, prevented sin in a single instance without this influence, how can it be proved *from facts*, that he could have prevented all sin, or even the present degree of sin in a moral system? *Had his creatures done what they could, then indeed there had been more holiness and less sin.* But the *question is, what could God have done to secure such a result?* Had he prevented the sins of one human being to the present time, or had he brought to repentance one sinner more than he has, who can prove that the requisite interposition for the purpose, would not result in a vast increase of sin in the system, including even the apostasy and augmented guilt of that individual? In a word, who is competent to foretell, or authorized even to *surmise* the consequences of the least iota of change in the present system of influence to produce holiness and prevent sin? If no one, then all assumptions on the subject, like that under consideration, are wholly unwarranted. It may be true, that God will secure under the present system of things, the greatest degree of holiness and the least degree of sin, which *it is possible to him in the nature of things* to secure. Neither the *nature of the subject*, nor *known facts*, furnish a particle of evidence to the contrary. The assumption therefore, that God could in a moral sys-

tem have prevented all sin, or the present degree of sin, is wholly gratuitous and unauthorized, and *ought never to be made the basis of an objection or an argument.*

14. "As an apology for this note, the writer would say that the objection alluded to in the discourse, so commonly rises in the mind in connection with the subject, that it was thought proper to notice it; and while he knows of no refutation except the one given, he was desirous of attempting still further to free the subject from distressing and groundless perplexity. This is done in his own view, simply by dismissing from the mind the two assumptions which have been examined. The mode in which the mind will in this way, be led to view the character and government of God may, it is believed, be shown to be free from embarrassment by an example.

15. "Suppose then the father of several sons to have foreknown with minute accuracy the various propensities and tendencies of their nature, and *all the possible* conditions or circumstances in which he might place them, with all the results of each condition. Suppose him also to foresee with absolute certainty, that to place them at a public seminary, although he knows it will be, unavoidably to himself, attended with a temporary course of vice on their part, will nevertheless result in greater good than he can secure by placing them in any *other* condition or circumstances. Suppose it to be true, and known to him, that their uniform good conduct at the seminary would be far better on the whole or in every respect than their misconduct. Suppose him now to send them at the proper age, to the place of their education with solemn and unqualified injunctions of uniform good conduct; and all the results to be as foreseen. Now can the procedure of this father be impeached in any respect whatever? Does he not evince wisdom and benevolence in every part of it? Does he not evince the most absolute and perfect sincerity in his injunctions of right conduct? Does he not at the same time furnish by what *he* does, adequate and decisive ground for acquiescence in view of the incidental evil; and is there not equally decisive ground for repentance to his disobedient children in what *they* do? If these things are so in the procedure of this father, why are they not so in the procedure of God?

"The writer hopes he shall not be charged *without proof*, with denying what he fully believes — that the providential purposes or decrees of God extend to all actual events, sin not excepted. God may really purpose the existence of sin, whether he purpose it for one reason or for another; he may, as the example shows, as really purpose sin though wholly an evil, considered as *incidental*, so far as his power of prevention is concerned, to the best moral system, as purpose it considered as so excellent in its nature and relations as to be the necessary means of the greatest good. And while the theory now proposed exhibits the providential government of God as the basis of submission, confidence, and joy, under all the evils that befal his dependent creatures; it also presents, as no other theory in the view of the writer does present, the Moral Government of God in its unimpaired perfection and glory, to deter from sin and allure to holiness his accountable subjects."

AN

EXAMINATION

OF THE

DOCTRINE OF PERFECTION,

AS HELD

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THE

DOCTRINE OF PERFECTION.

THE attention of the religious public has, of late, been frequently called to the subject above named, and much has been written and published on both sides of the question at issue between the parties. It is not my object to notice all the particular opinions and arguments which have been advanced by writers engaged in the controversy. I can promise no more than to take a summary view of the points which are regarded as of the first importance, to consider the manner in which the doctrine has been defended, and the chief arguments on which it rests, and to inquire what conclusion a candid regard to truth will lead us to adopt.

I have read several publications on the subject, particularly the Discourses of Mr. Mahan, which he had the kindness to send to me; the Letter of Mr. Fitch, and Dr. Weeks' Letter in reply; several Lectures of Mr. Finney, published in the Oberlin Evangelist; Dr. Pond's and Mr. Folsom's articles in the Am. Bib. Repository, and finally Mr. Mahan's article in reply to Mr. Folsom.* My design however is, to give the reader my own reflections, and to show exactly how the subject lies in my own mind. It is in accordance with the express desire of Mr. Mahan, that I have undertaken to review what he has published on the sub-

* American Biblical Repository, October, 1840.

ject; and I am persuaded that he would be far from wishing, that my personal regard to him should prevent a free and thorough examination of his system, or of the manner in which he defends it.

I begin with a general remark, the correctness of which no one will question. *When a man undertakes to sustain and propagate a novel system, — a system different from what has commonly been entertained by the best of men, — it is inadmissible for him to set forth, as a part of his peculiar system, any opinions which are held by those from whom he professes to differ.* He may show, if he can, that the principles which are common to him and to others, when rightly carried out, involve his peculiarities, and that those who do not embrace his system are inconsistent with themselves in holding to those common principles. He is at liberty to show that they stop short of the mark, and must suffer loss. But can he with propriety mention those commonly received principles, as *peculiar* to *him* in distinction from others? Can he take any advantage from them, to prove the excellence of *his* system above the common system? Can he in any way properly make the impression that they belong to *him*, more than to evangelical ministers generally?

In this respect, I am constrained to say, that Mr. Mahan, Mr. Fitch and others have, however undesignedly, committed an obvious fault, and one which is likely to mislead incautious readers. In various instances, they exhibit certain views and lay down certain principles, as peculiar to *themselves* in distinction from others, which, so far as they are true, are in fact held as fully by others as by them. Such a proceeding is evidently unfair, and whatever advantage may be derived from it, is unjust.

Now Mr. Mahan represents it as a principle belonging to his system, in distinction from the common system, that God has made full provision in the gospel to render Christians "perfect in every good work to do his will." In his Discourses, p. 16, where he professes to set forth his system, in contrast with the common system, he says: "On one side" (that is, on his side) "it is affirmed, that grace is provided in the gospel to render the Chris-

tian, even in this life, perfect in every good work to do the will of God. On the other side it is affirmed, that no such grace is provided." And in the Repository for October, 1840, p. 409, where he undertakes to show in what respect he differs from others, he repeats the same thing. In his Discourses, p. 93, he says: "The only existing difference" (that is, between his views and those commonly held) "respects the extent of the provisions and promises of divine grace, in regard to Christians in this life." And when he comes to state more practically what he regards as the peculiar excellence of his system, in distinction from the one commonly received (such a distinction being everywhere implied,) he points to this, namely: "that God has made full provision, not only for the pardon of every sin, but for the entire perfection of believers in holiness, and for every particular necessity which may come upon them in time and eternity."

Attentive readers will perceive that the idea of such a distinction, between the advocates of Perfection and others, has full possession of Mr. Mahan's mind, and is interwoven with the whole texture of his Discourses.

Mr. Fitch takes the same ground. He states it as the first point of inquiry between him and his brethren, *whether God, in the economy of his grace, has made provision to save his people from their sins;* and he affirms it to be *his* belief that such provision is made.

Now some readers will be inclined to exclaim; what a powerful recommendation is this of the doctrine of *Perfection!* What a striking argument in its favor! We find from the writings of these men, that the doctrine has this peculiar excellence, namely; it asserts that full provision has been made by divine grace for the entire deliverance of believers from sin. How precious such a provision! How plainly taught in the Bible! And how strange it is that Christians have so long overlooked it! How great the mistake of those who differ from these writers, and who do not believe that God has made provision for the entire sanctification of believers!

And yet it is a fact, that devout Christians and orthodox

divines have in all ages believed and maintained the precious doctrine, that in the proper Scripture sense, *full provision is made not only for the forgiveness of sin, but for the complete sanctification of God's people.* I might fill volumes with quotations from evangelical writers, in which this grand sentiment is strongly asserted and clearly illustrated, and is set forth as the foundation of hope and the spring of effort to believers. Let any one read the practical writings of Flavel, Owen, Bunyan, Watts, Doddridge, President Davies, Good, and numberless other authors, ancient and modern, and he will find that they exhibit this sentiment in all its preciousness. I hope to be excused, if I take the liberty to say, that no truth has been more familiar to my own mind, or more zealously inculcated in my preaching and conversation than this, *that the Saviour has made provision for the entire deliverance of his people from sin; that the gospel contains a remedy for all our spiritual diseases; that there is a fulness in Christ, adequate to supply all our need.* It has been the same with others. I could name many, whom I have known personally, who have zealously preached this doctrine, and have rested upon it, living and dying, as the rock of their salvation. By evangelical ministers generally, this doctrine has been regarded as one of the grand peculiarities of the gospel. In their view, the gospel is no gospel without it. And yet I must confess that neither I, nor my brethren generally, have given this great gospel truth so high a place as it ought to hold in our preaching. And Mr. Mahan might with propriety have noticed this, and might have truly said, that in many instances it has been so far neglected, as to make the impression upon others, that it was no part of our belief. But we do believe it, and we always have believed it; and we have sincerely and earnestly published it, as the ground of hope to man. We are, I acknowledge, under obligations to Mr. Mahan, for holding forth this truth so clearly, and giving it such prominence in the gospel plan. And if he had labored merely to wake up his brethren to juster views of the importance of this fundamental article of their faith, and to greater diligence and fervor in explaining, confirming and applying it; his labor would have been directed to a noble

object, and would not have been in vain. But for him to say, or imply, that orthodox ministers have not believed and taught this truth, — why, he might as well say, they have not believed and taught the divine authority of the Bible. The fact is, the more devoutly ministers and Christians have studied the word of God, the more they have known of themselves, and the more earnestly they have sought the teachings of the Holy Spirit, the better have they understood the provisions of the gospel, and the more entirely have they relied upon the all-sufficient grace of Christ. I am glad to see, that as Mr. Mahan has come to entertain more exalted views of the gracious provisions of the gospel for the sanctification of believers, he has ceased to give such prominence, as he formerly did, to the ability or free-will of man, and has expressly renounced it, as furnishing any ground of hope for sinners, or any spring of holiness to Christians, and has been brought to rely wholly on the grace of Christ, and to look to him for the whole of salvation. Luther did this, when he first emerged from the darkness of popery. William Cowper did this at his first conversion. Devout Christians have all done this, though with different degrees of clearness; and multitudes of them have done it in as high a degree and with as much comfort, as Mr. Mahan.

I have recently read the biography of Mrs. Hawkes, a humble Christain in the common walks of life, who derived special benefit from the instructions of Cecil. And I shall here make a single quotation from one of her letters, showing her cordial reliance on the grace of Christ for the whole of *sanctification*. She says to her correspondent: "You want to know how I have been conquering *self*. Alas! I have only been fighting against self, but am still very far from being a conqueror; and I am thankful to say, as you do, *Jesus shows me my strength is in him;* and my desire is, to be as a little child. When I want to act, I go to him for wisdom and strength. If I feel anger, I run to him and show it to him. When I feel pride rising upon any occasion, I go to him and confess it. To him I take every sin, as it arises — every want, every desponding thought. To him I go for every good thought, every good desire, every good word and work, crying,

Lord, help me in this, — Lord, help me in the other. It is thy grace alone, that can produce anything good in me. What else is meant by Christ's living in me, and I in him? It is by this simple faith, that we must bring forth good fruits; and to obtain it, we must plead the promises. How are we to be transformed in the spirit of our minds, and to be changed into his image, from glory to glory? Not by looking within, but by looking to Jesus."

Now how does this differ from the views exhibited by Mr. Mahan in the following passage. He says, just as thousands have said before: "The promises are adapted to every possible condition. They descend to the sinner in the lowest depths of guilt and depravity, for the purpose of lifting him out of the horrible pit, and rendering him a partaker of the divine nature. They meet the Christian in a state of partial holiness, for the purpose of raising him to a state of perfect love. Now to use the promises so as to become possessed of the blessings they proffer to us, four things are necessary: that we know our need; that we apprehend the particular promise of Christ which was designed to meet that particular necessity; that we repose full confidence in the ability and faithfulness of Christ to fulfil the promise; and that we cast our whole being upon him, for the specific purpose of securing a fulfilment of the particular promise before us. For example; the sinner is brought to feel himself to be in a lost condition. Here he is met with the declaration of Christ: *I came to seek and to save that which was lost; — and whosoever cometh unto me, I will in nowise cast out.* Let the sinner cast himself directly upon Christ, for the definite purpose of securing a fulfilment of this promise. Are you in darkness? Go directly to Christ for the fulfilment of the promise: *I will lead the blind by a way which they knew not.* Is your heart hard and unfeeling? Go to Christ and cast yourself upon his faithfulness for the fulfilment of the promise: *I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and will give you a heart of flesh.* Do temptations beset you? Go to Christ with the promise: *who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able, but will with the temptation make a way*

to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. Are you about to enter into new scenes, or spheres of action? Go to Christ with the promises: *lo, I am with you always, and, my grace is sufficient for thee.* In short, whatever your condition, remember that you are addressed by your Saviour with some specific promise, perfectly adapted to your case; and your life depends upon your casting yourself at once upon the faithfulness of Christ for the fulfilment of that promise."

Now all this which I have quoted from Mr. Mahan, is just and Scriptural, exhibiting the true spirit of the gospel. And all that is wanted is, that he should have frankly said, *this is nothing new. It is the good old way, in which evangelical writers and Christians have always understood and applied the provisions and promises of the gospel.* I could easily cite many passages of the same import, and still more striking, from Bunyan's Jerusalem Sinner Saved, M'Laurin's Sermons, Good's Better Covenant, and the writings of John Newton. And I have hoped that orthodox ministers would give up what remains among them of a cold, abstruse, philosophical way of preaching, and adopt more fully the determination of Paul, *to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified*, and to make him *all in all.* May the day soon come when this shall be the case unvisersally. And let us, who differ from Mr. Mahan in other respects, be careful to profit by his remarks on this subject; and let us copy his earnestness in holding forth the all-sufficient provisions of the gospel for the entire sanctification of believers.

My aim has been to do full justice to Mr. Mahan, in holding the great principle above considered; and at the same time to show, that orthodox writers and preachers have, in the true Scripture sense, held the same principle, and that, in this respect, Mr. Mahan has made no advance beyond the common faith of the Christian church. Of course it must be wrong for him or any others to suppose, that holding this principle can be turned to the advantage of *his* system in distinction from the system commonly received by the orthodox.

But Mr. Mahan thinks that his peculiar doctrine certainly fol-

lows from the fact, that provision is made for the entire sanctification of believers. This, then, shall be my inquiry. *From the fact that provision is made in the gospel dispensation for the complete sanctification of believers, does it follow that they will be completely sanctified in the present life?* Let us dismiss other points till we have disposed of this. It is a matter of reasoning. And those who are accustomed to reasoning know how important it is to give a fixed attention to the point under consideration, and to be careful not to wander from it.

The question at issue may be taken up in two ways. First, Do the provisions of the gospel, *taken by themselves*, certainly prove that believers will *ever* be completely sanctified?

Now, if the actual and complete sanctification of believers certainly follows from the mere provisions of the gospel, it must be on this principle, — *that if God has made provision in his providence, or in the gospel dispensation, for the accomplishment of a particular end, that end will actually be accomplished.* If such provision may be made, and yet the end fail of being accomplished, then we can no longer infer such accomplishment from such provision; and in order to make out a conclusive proof that the end will be accomplished, we must argue from some other premises besides the simple fact that provision is made for it.

Our question then is, do the general provisions of the gospel for the complete sanctification of God's people prove that they will *ever*, *in fact*, be completely sanctified?

Mr. Mahan is no stranger to reasoning; and he will, I am persuaded, bring to the consideration of this subject an active, discerning, and candid mind. I shall then make my appeal directly to him. And I ask my dear brother; has not God, in this favored land, made a general provision for the comfortable support of all the inhabitants? — such provision, that all who enjoy the other common blessings of life in an ordinary degree may, by suitable exertions, obtain such a support? But does it follow, from such provision, that all the inhabitants will actually obtain a comfortable support? I ask again, is not a general provision made in the gospel for the salvation of all sinners to whom the

gospel is published? But does it follow from this, that all who hear the gospel *will* be saved? May not something else come in to prevent that salvation for which provision is made? If so, then the general question returns, can we infer from the simple fact that provision is made for the accomplishment of a particular object, that the object will actually be accomplished?

It will be seen that I speak here of a *conditional* provision, such as our Saviour spoke of in the parable of the king who made a marriage for his son. The message he sent to the invited guests was, — "Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and *all things are ready;* come to the marriage." Here was certainly a free and bountiful provision made for those who were invited, though it could not be enjoyed without complying with the invitation of the king; and many of the invited did not comply. From this parable we learn, that the blessings of salvation which God has provided, are sufficient to supply all the wants of men, particularly the wants of believers — sufficient for their complete sanctification and blessedness; — as we say of the atonement, it is a provision of divine mercy sufficient for the salvation of all men, — it is a measure of divine wisdom and benevolence providing salvation for sinners, on condition of their repentance and faith. The provision is such, that if they comply with the terms, they will be actually saved. This is what I mean by a conditional provision. So government makes provision for the support of the poor, though some poor men refuse to accept the benefits of it; and a man makes provision, that is, preparation beforehand, for the support of his children, or does what is necessary for their support, although, through their own fault, they may fail to receive it. It is with this latitude of signification, that I use the word *provision* in the present case. Such provision is made, that if they are not and so far as they are not complete in holiness, it is not owing to any want of mercy in God, or to any want of sufficiency in the atonement, or to any scantiness or deficiency in the provisions of the gospel. Their falling short of being entirely sanctified, is their falling short of being what they should be, and of what they might be, if

they would receive and use the grace of Christ as they ought to do.

But my brother, who is fond of argument, will bear with me, while I take up the question in the other way alluded to. He often asserts that God has made provision for the complete sanctification of believers *during the present life.* Be it so. Then I ask him whether God has not made provision for the complete sanctification of believers during the present *day*, and the present *hour*, yea, the present *minute?* I think he will not hesitate a moment to answer in the affirmative. A mind like his will see what consequences would press upon him from the denial. How then will he dispose of this matter? From the fact, that provision is made in the gospel for the complete sanctification of believers the present hour and minute, will he draw the conclusion that they do in reality obtain complete sanctification the present hour and minute? And if not, how can he draw the other conclusion, namely, that they are completely sanctified during the present *life*, because a general provision is made for it in the gospel? May not some other cause intervene to prevent the accomplishment of the object, for which such conditional provision is made? And may it not hinder the accomplishment for a longer as well as for a shorter time? — for a few years as well as for an hour or a minute?

The other circumstances, such as promises, prayers, etc., which may be combined with the simple provision of the gospel, and which may be supposed to insure the accomplishment of the object, will be considered in another place. Our present inquiry is, whether, from the simple fact that provision, in the sense above explained, is made for the entire sanctification of believers *in this life*, we can infer that such sanctification will actually take place? And I think I may regard it as a point agreed to on all hands, and certainly by the brother with whom I am arguing the case, that such an inference cannot be drawn.

Mr. Mahan represents it as a question of great consequence, "whether we may now, during the progress of the present life, attain to entire perfection in holiness," or, *whether a state of com-*

plete holiness is attainable in the present life. He informs us that he does not use the words *attainable* and *practicable* with reference merely or chiefly to our natural powers as intelligent, accountable agents, but with reference to the provisions of divine grace. And he lays it down as a distinguishing truth of his system, that "complete holiness is, in the highest and most common acceptation of the term, *attainable.*" And he states it as a point peculiar to him and his party, "that we *may* render to God the perfect obedience which he requires."

Now, in a limited, conditional sense, it is true that Christians *may* render to God the obedience which he requires. They *may*, if they do as they ought. They *may*, if they rightly use all their powers and faculties, and avail themselves fully of the gracious provisions of the gospel. Perfection is *attainable* in this sense, that it is not prevented by any mental incapacity, nor by any want of sufficiency in the grace of Christ. It is not *unattainable* in such a sense, that Christians are excusable for not attaining it. This, I think, is the prevailing sense of the words and phrases above mentioned. It is not commonly said, that any good is entirely and absolutely *unattainable*, unless there is something which keeps men from it besides their own fault. And as there is nothing which keeps Christians from perfection but that which is faulty and inexcusable in themselves, it would be a departure from the common use of terms to say, it is absolutely *unattainable.*

The *attainableness* of anything surely does not mean the same thing as its being *actually attained.* For it is very common to speak of things, for example, the improvement of the mind, and a state of competence, as things which are *attainable*, or which *may* be obtained, though they are not actually obtained. The same as to the blessings of the gospel. Mr. Mahan would doubtless say, that salvation is *attainable* by all who hear the gospel; that under the dispensation of grace, any sinners *may* be saved; meaning, that means and opportunities are provided; that the way is prepared; that salvation is freely offered to them on reasonable terms; that a proper conduct on their part will secure the blessing, and that if they do not obtain it, they and they only

will be the faulty cause of the failure. When we say a thing is *not attainable*, we mean that, whatever we may do, we cannot obtain it, and that our failing to obtain it will not be owing to any misconduct or neglect on our part. It is often and truly represented, that impenitent sinners at the judgment day, will have the painful reflection that the blessedness of heaven was offered to them, and was put within their reach — that they *might* have been saved, but refused the infinite good.

See, now, how Mr. Mahan treats this subject. He says, the church and the ministry, almost universally, believe that perfection is *unattainable*. And then he inquires, how Christians can aim at perfection, *with the belief that it is not attainable*. But in the sense which he gives to the language, this is not the common belief. So that his representation is incorrect, and the inference he draws from it is unwarrantable.

But there is a question here which must not be overlooked. We hold, that complete holiness is, in the qualified sense above explained, *attainable*. Does this prove that it is *actually attained?* Here again I shall address myself to Mr. Mahan. Do you not hold that salvation is *attainable* by all sinners who hear the gospel? But do you infer from this that all will be saved? Further; do you not hold that complete holiness is *attainable* by all believers *now*, this very *day*, and this very *minute?* But your writings show that you are far enough from thinking that all believers *are* completely holy now. If you really thought them to be so, why should you show such grief at their short-comings? And why speak, as you do, of Christians "partially sanctified?" And why labor with such zeal to stir them up to make higher attainments, and seek after perfection? Now if you yourself do not think that *the actual attainment* of perfection can be inferred from its *attainableness;* can it be right for you to employ modes of reasoning which imply, or seem to imply, that you do think so?

Mr. Mahan and others place great dependence upon the divine promises for the support of their doctrine. The question which I shall now consider is, whether the promises of God, *when rightly interpreted*, do really support the doctrine.

It is hardly necessary to say, that I perfectly agree with Mr. Mahan in the confident belief that God will fulfil all his promises, taken in their *true meaning*. And no one can expect them to be accomplished in a sense which they were never intended to bear. The first inquiry then must be, as to the true meaning of the promises referred to. The great and precious promise of the New Covenant, on which Mr. Mahan founds his fourth Discourse, is this; "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts, and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people, etc.; and all shall know me, from the least to the greatest; for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins will I remember no more." Mr. Mahan says, that Christ, here and in other places, promises to believers "a confirmed state of pure and perfect holiness, such as is required in the moral law." The moral law requires pure and perfect holiness at the present time, and at all times. We must then suppose Mr. Mahan's meaning to be, that God here *promises* perfect holiness to believers now, and at all times. But how does the text just recited, containing the great promise of the New Covenant — how does it show this? Is it certain, that God's putting his laws in the minds of his people, and writing them in their hearts, is precisely the same thing as bringing them to "a confirmed state of pure and perfect holiness?" Is it certain that the law cannot be written in the heart, *in some degree*, when it is not done perfectly? Is it a thing so evident that it may be taken for granted, without proof, that there cannot be *real* obedience where there is not *perfect* obedience? — *some* degree of holiness in those who are not *completely* holy? It is manifest, that the above mentioned promise may be accomplished in *different degrees*. It is accomplished in a lower degree, when God, by his Spirit, brings men to repent, and to render cordial obedience to his law *in a small measure*. It is accomplished in a *higher* degree, when he brings them to render obedience *in a larger measure*. And it is accomplished in the highest degree, or perfectly, when he brings them to render an *unceasing* and *perfect* obedience. And this is only saying, what is true in a thousand cases, that a good work may be done

or a favor conferred in different degrees, and that its being done in one degree does not necessarily imply that it is done in another and higher degree. It would seem that no one can mistake concerning a matter so plain as this. Take the promise above recited, that *all shall know God from the least to the greatest.* I ask Mr. Mahan whether this promise has ever been completely fulfilled, respecting either the children of Israel or any other nation? If he says yes, I ask, when? If he says no, as he doubtless will, then I ask, how, on his principle of interpreting the promises, he can vindicate the faithfulness of God? Will he say, although the promise has never yet been fulfilled, it will be *hereafter?* Then I ask, why the same may not hold in respect to all the texts in which God promises to make his people completely holy? If God may be faithful in respect to the promise that *all* shall know him, because he will fulfil it at a distant, future period, though for thousands of years it has remained unfulfilled; may he not be faithful in respect to his promise *that his people shall be made perfect in holiness*, if he fulfils it to them *a few days hence*, — that is, when they are removed to the heavenly state — although it may not be fulfilled during the short period of the present life?

But with respect to the promise of God, that the world shall be converted, and all flesh see his salvation, we may take another view. It is clear that the promise, in the full extent of its meaning, has not yet been accomplished. But has not something been done *towards* its accomplishment? Have not multitudes, in different parts of the world, been converted to God? Has not the kingdom of Christ been extended more and more? And may not the promise that the whole world shall be turned from sin, be intended to include not only the final event of the universal reign of Christ, but all the events of the same kind which are introductory to it, that is, all instances of the conversion of sinners, and especially of the spread of the gospel in pagan countries? And, accordingly, may not such a promise, like many of the prophecies, have a gradual, progressive accomplishment — an accomplishment extending through a long period of time, and leading on to a complete fulfilment in the end? And if God, in his unsearchable

wisdom, sees fit to accomplish his word of promise or prediction in this way, does it become us to say, either that he does not accomplish it, or that he does not show his faithfulness as clearly as if he should accomplish it at once? Unless we fall into such a train of thought as I have suggested, we shall be under the painful necessity of holding, that the most precious and glorious promises of God respecting the enlargement and prosperity of his kingdom, have not, to this day, been accomplished in any respect or in any degree — that they have not even *begun* to be fulfilled.

The same remarks apply to the promises of the New Covenant respecting the sanctification of believers. Take the precious promise, that Jesus "shall save his people from their sins;" and look at all believers now living. Has Jesus already saved them all completely from their sins? Is it true that, at the present time, there is no sin, no moral defilement in any of them? Mr. Mahan is far from believing this. Has the promise then been *really fulfilled*, in regard to the great body of Christians now living? Yes, we say, *really* fulfilled, though not as yet *completely* fulfilled: — *really* fulfilled, inasmuch as Jesus has *begun* to save them from their sins, and given them a degree of true holiness: — but not *completely* fulfilled, inasmuch as sin, in different degrees, still dwells in them. We can take no other view of the subject, unless we hold either that the promise remains wholly unaccomplished respecting the present race of believers, or else that every true believer is now in a state of sinless perfection. But Mr. Mahan does not hold that all believers are now perfect. He considers Christians generally as very deficient in faith and obedience, and presents complete holiness before them, as an object to be *sought*, not as *already obtained*. Will he then say, that the precious promise above named has not, in any degree, been fulfilled respecting them? I think he will rather say, whatever may become of his theory, that as the gracious Redeemer "has begun a good work in them," he has begun to save them from their sins, and so has, *in a measure*, really fulfilled the promise.

Take one promise more: — "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all

your idols will I cleanse you." Let this be admitted to relate to all believers. Has it, then, been already *completely* fulfilled in respect to every one of them, so that no moral pollution remains? Mr. Mahan will say, clearly not. Has it, then, been really fulfilled in *any degree?* Certainly it has been. Their being true Christians implies, that God has made them clean *in some measure* — that they are really sanctified *in a degree.* Now who will say, that God may not cause his faithfulness to be seen and admired in regard to a promise, which has already been fulfilled in some degree, and to some extent, but is hereafter to have a more extensive and more perfect fulfilment.

But as this is one of the main points, I am not yet ready to dismiss it. My wish is, to examine the question as to the accomplishment of the divine promises which relate to the sanctification of believers so thoroughly, that all difficulties may, as far as possible, be removed, and that we may have no occasion to dwell on the subject again.

Come then, my dear brother, let us reason together a little further on the subject before us. In what manner are we to understand the promises and declarations of God which you have so often quoted, *in regard to the time of their complete fulfilment?* We agree what the promises are, and what a complete accomplishment implies. And we agree that they will, first or last, be completely accomplished. The great and the only inquiry remaining respects the *time* of such accomplishment. To this let us give our undivided attention.

I understand your position to be, that the divine promises and declarations clearly imply, *that believers will be sanctified completely during the progress of the present life.* But is this position tenable? When the Scripture declares, that Jesus shall save his people from their sins, it certainly does not expressly declare *when* he will do it. In what way, then, do you *ascertain* the time when? The Apostle says, that "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it — and that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it might be holy and with-

out blemish." But he certainly does not tell us, in the passage itself, that Christ will accomplish all this for the whole church during the *present life*, that he does now actually present the whole body of believers to himself without spot or blemish. If then you prove this to be the meaning of the passage, you must do it by other considerations. The Apostle, in another passage, says, that "Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity." But he certainly does not say, in the passage itself, that Christ will do all this for us *during our continuance in this world.* I must therefore ask again, by what other considerations do you make it out, that this is *the proper meaning* of the passage? I agree with you that in the New Covenant, God promises to give to his people all that he requires of them in his law. This was a principle which Augustine often advanced, and to which he attached great importance. Multitudes from that day to this have done the same. Indeed this sentiment is virtually held by all devout Christians. It is wrought as an element into their faith and their prayers. But does this precious promise of the New Covenant mean, that God will work in them a complete conformity with his law, *while they are passing through the present world?* It is evident from what you have published, that you consider this to be the proper meaning of the promise, and you often and very plainly signify, that unless believers are completely sanctified in the present life, the promise fails. But how does this appear? Because a promise is not fully accomplished at *a particular time*, does it follow that it is *never* accomplished? Much depends on this inquiry; and I pray you not to pass over it hastily. A promise was early made that a Saviour should come; but thousands of years passed away, and he did not come. Did the promise therefore fail of its accomplishment? God made a promise to Abraham, that he would give to his seed the land of Canaan for an inheritance. Can we say that God did not fulfil this promise, because he deferred the fulfilment for so many hundred years? God has promised to deliver his people from all iniquity, and to make them perfectly holy. And suppose that, *in the end*, he perfectly fulfils it. Does he fail to fulfil it,

because he does not fulfil it sooner? I trust that my dear brother, with whom I am so freely discussing this subject, will, after a few days more, be so happy as to be admitted into the heavenly world, and there be freed forever from all moral evil, and, through divine grace, made perfectly holy. And suppose he then looks from that blessed world upon the present state; and suppose that, in the light of heaven, he sees (what he may not now always see) that he was, all the way through life, liable to mistakes; and that, in his best frames, he had some remains of sin, — but was at length delivered from it, and made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Will he say, that God failed to accomplish his promise, because he did not accomplish it sooner? If a thing is finally done, can any one say it is not done, because it was not done before? If we see hereafter that, according to the divine promise, the knowledge of God fills the earth, and the whole world is converted, shall we then say the promise has failed because so long a time passed away before it was carried into full effect?

Just look at the principle brought into view, 2 Pet. 3: 3, 4, 8, 9. The Apostle first says, that "in the last days there shall be scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, *where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.*" From the long delay of Christ's coming, those scoffers took occasion to call in question the certainty of the event, and the truth of the promise. With direct reference to this, the Apostle introduces the principle above alluded to, and says; "Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering," etc. He delays the fulfilment of his promise, not from slackness, as some suppose, but for wise and benevolent ends. Now when you say or imply, that the promise of God to redeem his people from all iniquity and make them perfectly holy, requires that he should do all this during the period of the present life; do you not overlook the principle, which the Apostle represents as so highly important, and so well adapted to solve the

difficulty he had to encounter? God has promised to bestow upon his people the grace of perfect sanctification. But, according to the common belief of the Christian church, they are, through all the days of their life, sanctified only in part. And will you, on this account, say, *where is the promise of his grace?* If you do, I answer you in the words of the Apostle; "Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack," he does not forget his promise to redeem his people from all iniquity, because he takes time for it. The difference between a day and a thousand years is nothing with the Lord. What *is to be* is, with him, as though it were *now*. If he accomplishes the promise in future time, he is as faithful and true as though he did it to-day. If Christians find themselves perfectly holy when they enter heaven, they will most surely acknowledge and admire the goodness and faithfulness of God in completely fulfilling his gracious promise, though they will remember that through all the days and years of this imperfect life, they had to struggle against "the law of sin in their members."

You see how the matter stands. And I must beseech you no longer to argue from the faithfulness of God in regard to his promises, that he must completely sanctify his people during any part of the present life; inasmuch as his faithfulness will be fully vindicated, and will shine forth with infinite glory, when it is made manifest in heaven, that the gracious work has at length been finished. Never then suffer the thought to enter your mind, that we do not consider the promises as precious as you do, or that we do not as confidently expect their fulfilment.

I now press the inquiry, whether the divine promises, *when rightly understood*, afford any support to your favorite doctrine? And as this is a point on which so much depends in the discussion, let us not be weary in examining it thoroughly. Let us view it on all sides with the closest attention, so that we may, if possible, be sure to guard against error, and to find the truth. The truth is incomparably precious, and is worthy to be searched for with untiring zeal. And if we happen, in any respect, to pass over the

same ground again, let us do it with increased watchfulness and care.

You have quoted many of the gracious promises which God has made as to the entire deliverance of believers from sin. Suppose now I quote the same promises, and say, these promises plainly imply, that God will completely sanctify his people *as soon as they believe.* Suppose I say; here is the promise of God, that "Jesus shall save his people from their sins;" and this implies that he will completely save them from their sins at once, when they become believers; and unless he does this, his promise falls to the ground. And here we have the declaration of God, that Christ came to redeem his people from all iniquity; and this must mean that he will redeem them from all iniquity the very hour and minute in which they believe in him; and if they remain a single hour without perfect holiness, the declaration is not accomplished. What objection can you make to all this? Will you say, I have no right to limit the fulfilment of the divine promise or declaration to *a single hour* or *minute?* But why have not I as good a right to give to the divine promise *these narrow limits*, as you have to give it limits of a little larger extent? Show me what authority you have to say, the promise must be fulfilled in a year, or in ten or twenty years, or during the present life (which may not be half a year or day,) more than I have to say, it must be fulfilled the present hour or minute. Take time to look at this matter carefully; and then bring forward the reason why you limit the fulfilling of the promise to the few fleeting days of the present life, and yet say it is not limited to the present hour or minute.

Mr. Mahan argues much in support of his doctrine from the prayers of Christians. As to the fact that Christians pray, and pray earnestly for complete sanctification, I agree with him. It is, in my view, essential to the character of true believers, that they should sincerely desire and pray, that the blood of Christ may cleanse them from all sin, and that the God of peace would sanctify them wholly. And they do unquestionably desire and pray that God would sanctify them wholly during the *present life*, yea, during the *very day and hour and minute*, in which they offer up

acceptable prayer. And one thing more I hold to be unquestionable, that is, that God will certainly, in the highest and best sense, answer their prayers, and bestow upon them the precious blessing of complete sanctification; yea, will do exceeding abundantly above all that they ask or think. Mr. Mahan repeats the words of John: "This is the confidence we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us; — and whatsoever we ask, we have the petitions that we desired of him." He then adds: "Have we not here positive proof, that when we pray in faith for perfect holiness, that blessing will be bestowed upon us?" I answer, yes; it will certainly be bestowed. But *when?* He thinks it must be during the progress of the *present life*. But why such *large* limits? Why not during the present *hour?* How can he prove that God will so answer our prayers, as to accomplish the whole work of sanctification during the period of this life, any more than I can prove that he will accomplish it during the present hour? He appeals to the reader, and says: "Is it possible for us to believe, that Christ himself prayed, and taught his disciples to pray, and that the Holy Spirit inspired apostles and saints to pray, for a blessing which the Scriptures require us to believe God will not bestow upon his people?" I answer, it would be strange indeed, if any one should believe this. But what has this to do with the point at issue? For admitting, as all do, that God will certainly give the saints the perfect sanctification for which they pray, the question in debate still remains; that is, *when* will God do it? The invaluable gift of perfect holiness will be *truly* bestowed, if bestowed at all. And the prayers which Christians so often and so earnestly offer up for this blessing, will be as really and fully answered, if answered at a later period, as if answered earlier. The patriarchs longed and prayed for the coming of the Messiah. And were not their prayers as really answered by his coming after so long a time, as if he had come before? God has promised to answer the humble, confiding, importunate prayers of his children; and he certainly will answer them. Heaven and earth shall pass away sooner than one of his promises shall fail. This is our full belief; though Mr. Mahan

charges us with affirming that we ought to offer up prayer for complete sanctification, "with the certain expectation of not receiving the blessing." It is a mistaken charge. Our certain expectation is, that we *shall* receive the blessing. But while we believe that God certainly answers the prayers of his children, we do not forget that he does it at the time and in the manner which he sees to be best. Sometimes he answers their prayers immediately, and the blessing comes while they are yet speaking. Sometimes he grants them precious blessings, even before their prayers are offered up. Sometimes, as in the case of Paul, he withholds the particular good sought, and grants another of equal or superior value. Sometimes he begins to answer prayer soon, but gives not a full answer for a long time. For example; in all past ages his people have offered up the prayer dictated by Christ: "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven." His kingdom has come to *some extent*, but not generally. His will has been done *truly*, but hitherto very imperfectly. We however look for the time when the prayer will be more fully answered in the universal prevalence of love and obedience. God sees this way of answering prayer to be the wisest and best. And when we come to be competent judges, we shall see it to be so too. Mr. Mahan represents the two petitions above mentioned as containing a pledge that the events shall take place. But have they taken place to the full extent of these petitions? Has the kingdom of God fully come, and his will been done on earth as in heaven? Mr. Mahan says, "we have the pledge of Christ that they shall be granted, *when* asked in faith." Have they not been asked in faith? Did not some one of the apostles or primitive Christians ask them in faith? Has no Christian, from the time when Jesus dictated the prayer to the present day, offered it up in faith? Has not Mr. Mahan, or Mr. Fitch, or Mr. Finney, or some other good man, offered up this prayer in faith? And yet we see it not yet fully answered. What then has become of the pledge, "that it shall be granted *when* asked in faith?" Do these writers mean, that these petitions, when offered in faith, shall be answered *immediately?* If so, then they must be driven

to the painful conclusion, that neither they themselves, nor any other Christians have ever offered them up in faith. But we have been led to suppose, from their representations, that they would doubt almost anything sooner than they would doubt the reality and strength of their own faith. And as they are doubtless confident that they have thus prayed, and confident too that God heareth them, "and that they have the petitions which they have desired of him;" why do they not come forward boldly, and say; God's kingdom *is* come, and his will *is* done on earth as in heaven. We have prayed in faith for this; and God has not failed to answer our prayers. We prayed for this some time ago; and God has not *delayed* to answer our prayers. He *has* answered them; and we *have* the petitions we desired of him. Whatever may be appearances to the contrary, his kingdom certainly *has come*, and his will is now done on earth as in heaven. Yes, it must be so; for God has heard us. And though the eye of sense cannot see it, the eye of faith must see, that the world is now filled with the knowledge of God; that his will is perfectly obeyed by the whole human family, and the earth converted into a paradise.—What hinders them from saying this? They *must* say it; or they must say they have never prayed in faith for the coming of Christ's kingdom; or they must say, God does not answer prayer; or else they must adopt the principle which I have endeavored to defend, namely, that God often extends his answer to prayer over hundreds and even thousands of years, accomplishing the inestimable good desired *gradually*, and, in the end, bringing about a result, which will display clearly and gloriously his unfailing faithfulness in the *complete* fulfilment of his promise *to answer prayer*. If they adopt this principle, and apply it to the case in hand, they can no longer argue in support of their peculiar doctrine respecting perfection, from the prayers which Christians offer up for complete holiness, or from the certainty that God will answer their prayers. The Bible teaches that Christians ought to pray and do pray for perfect sanctification, and that God will answer their prayers, and grant the blessing they pray for. But where does the Bible authorize us to take the other step, and

limit the time when God must give the answer, to *the present day*, or *the present year*, or to any part of *the present life?*

Mr. Mahan quotes the prayer of Christ, that all believers "may be one," and "may be made perfect in one." He says, "the union here prayed for is a union of perfect love;" which I think very obvious. He then argues, that this love will exist among believers, or that Christ prayed for what God will not bestow. The latter he does not for a moment admit. Of course he holds that this "union of perfect love will exist among believers." *Will* exist! I ask you, *when?* You doubtless remember that Christ offered up this prayer eighteen hundred years ago. And now, after fifty generations, you say, the prayer *will* be answered, and that perfect love "*will* exist among believers!" Pray, my dear brother, why don't you say, it *has* been answered, — that the union of perfect love, for which Jesus prayed, *has* existed ever since Christ offered up the prayer, and *does now* exist? As to the prayers of common Christians, you may say, there is a deficiency; they are wanting in faith, or in fervor. But you cannot say this of the prayer of Jesus. It was a prayer entirely and in the highest degree pleasing to God. Do you say, God *has* answered it? No. You say, he *will* answer it. And thus you virtually acknowledge that the faithfulness of God, in answering prayer, did not require him fully to answer the prayer even of Jesus, during his life, or during the life of fifty generations of his followers. You virtually acknowledge, that God may be truly said to hear and answer prayer, even the prayer of his beloved Son, though he does not fully grant the blessing desired for thousands of years. On what pretence then can you any longer maintain, that God cannot properly be said to answer the prayers of believers for perfect holiness, unless he makes them perfectly holy at the present time, or, at furthest, during some part of the present life?

One word more on this point. Prayer for any good plainly implies that the good is not already obtained. For if obtained, why should it be prayed for? The prayers of prophets and apostles for their own complete sanctification, or that of others,

had a manifest reference to a *future* good, a blessing *not yet received.* Jesus prayed thus for his disciples: "Sanctify them through thy truth." They had been *sanctified* in part. What Jesus prayed for was, that they might be sanctified in a higher degree, yea, completely; a blessing which he looked upon as *future.* So the Apostle prays for believers at Thessalonica: "the Lord make you to *increase* and abound in love." Their love existed in an imperfect degree, and needed *increase.* He prayed, too, that the Lord would establish their hearts "unblamable in holiness before God, at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." He prayed for a *future* good, and fixed his eye upon the second coming of Christ, as the time when it was to be completely accomplished. Again, he prayed for believers, "that God would fulfil in them all the good pleasure of his goodness, and make them perfect in every good work," always implying, that the blessing prayed for had not yet been fully obtained. And does not every Christian feel this to be the case, when he hungers and thirsts for righteousness, and cries earnestly to God for complete sanctification? Not long since, I heard, with great delight, the fervent prayers of my brother Mahan, for the entire subjection of all the powers of the soul to Christ, — for entire sanctification. Doubtless he prays in the same manner still. And when he thus prays, he doubtless looks upon perfect holiness as a blessing *to be* bestowed upon him by the grace of God, not as already bestowed. For if already bestowed, it should be made the subject not of *petition*, but of thanksgiving. And in that case I should expect that instead of crying to God and wrestling with God for perfect holiness of heart and life, he would stand forth with devout confidence, and say: *God, I thank thee that I am perfectly free from sin, and perfectly conformed to the holy image of Christ.* But does he pray thus? And would he like to hear any other man pray thus? No. Whatever may be the speculative notions of true believers, when they come before a holy, heart-searching God in prayer, they will follow the promptings of their own humble, contrite spirits, and will beseech God to cleanse them from all sin, and make them perfect in holiness. And, however advanced they

may be in the divine life, they will continue to pray thus as long as they live, always feeling, as the Apostle did, that they are "not already perfect," and always reaching after it, and beseeching the God of all grace to bestow the long desired and precious blessing upon them in all its fulness.

In a review of the ground over which I have passed, I request Mr. Mahan, and every other advocate of "the doctrine of perfection," seriously to consider whether they have not, however unintentionally, claimed, or seemed to claim, some important principles as *peculiar* to *them*, which are held by evangelical ministers and Christians generally; whether they have not in this way made a wrong impression upon the less intelligent and less cautious members of the religious community; and whether they have not thus been laboring to establish and propagate their opinions by means which are evidently wanting in candor and fairness. And I very cheerfully leave them, and all who read these pages, to judge, whether any valid argument in support of "the doctrine of perfection" can be drawn from any of those points which I have examined; that is, from the provisions of the gospel, from the attainableness of perfection, from the promises of God, or from the prayers of his people. The arguments which Mr. Mahan derives from these considerations are the principal arguments on which he rests the truth of his system. But I am greatly mistaken if these arguments of his do not prove to be altogether inconclusive. And I shall be greatly disappointed if my respected brethren, who have recently advocated the doctrine of perfection, do not feel themselves bound in truth to abstain from any further attempt to uphold their scheme by the arguments which have here been noticed.

Before proceeding to other points, I must also request Mr. Mahan and every reader to observe, that so far as any of the abovementioned arguments prove that complete holiness is attained by *any* believers in the present life, they prove that it is attained by *all* believers. There is not the least intimation in the Scriptures, that the rich provisions of the gospel are made for a part of God's people, more than for all of them; or that perfection is

more attainable by some than by others; or that the divine promises or the prayers of believers respecting sanctification will be carried into full effect in some and not in others. Let this be well considered and remembered. It will certainly come out in the end, that the advocates of "Perfection" must give up the arguments just referred to, or, to be at all consistent, must have the courage to maintain that *all* believers are perfectly sanctified in this life. They cannot, without palpable inconsistency, stay where they are. Their own arguments, so far as they have already been considered, will unavoidably thrust them from their present position. They cannot, by any of these arguments, show that a *select few* are completely sanctified, without proving, at the same time, that this is the case with all Christians. But I shall have occasion to advert to this point more particularly in the course of the following discussion.

It is somewhat remarkable that men of sense, who are engaged in a controversy, should not be agreed as to the real question in debate. What! Do not disputants themselves know what they are disputing about? Mr. Mahan thinks the question between the advocates and opposers of the doctrine of "Perfection," has been misapprehended and misstated. And in the following passage he undertakes to state it *clearly* and *definitely*. The question is, he says, "*Whether we may now, during the progress of the present life, attain to entire perfection in holiness, and whether it is proper for us to indulge the anticipation of making such attainments.* One part of the church affirm, that the perfect obedience which God requires of us, we may render to him. The other affirm that it is criminal for us to *expect* to render that obedience. One part affirm, that we ought to aim at entire perfection in holiness, with the expectation of attaining to that state. The other part affirm, that we ought to aim at the same perfection, with the certain expectation of not attaining to it. On the one hand, it is affirmed that we ought to pray that the very God of peace will sanctify us wholly, and preserve our whole spirit and soul and body blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, with the expectation that God will answer our prayers by the bestowment of that

very blessing. On the other hand, it is affirmed that we ought to put up that identical prayer, with the certain expectation of not receiving the blessing we desire. On the one hand, it is affirmed that grace is provided in the gospel to render the Christian, even in this life, perfect in every good work to do the will of God. On the other hand, it is affirmed that no such grace is provided."

Mr. Mahan calls the question above stated a "*simple* question;" whereas it is in truth very *complex*, being made up of different points, some of which are still compounds, consisting partly of matters in dispute, and partly of matters not in dispute. This will be evident if we analyze the passage. He first states the question thus: "Whether we may now, during the progress of the present life, attain to entire perfection in holiness, and whether it is proper for us to indulge the anticipation of making such attainments." Here are two distinct questions, one of which, *as I have explained it*, we answer in the affirmative, the other in the negative. There is a sense, and an important sense, in which Christians *might* attain to perfection in this life; that is, they might attain to it, if they would do what they ought, — if they would rightly use all their powers and faculties of mind, and all their means and privileges; — so that their not attaining it is their own fault. We are accustomed to say that any object is *attainable*, if it may be attained on these conditions, although it never is attained. In this qualified sense, we answer the first question in the affirmative. The next question is, "Whether it is proper for us to indulge the anticipation of making such attainments?" i. e. in the present life. This we answer in the negative. For unless there is evidence that good men have attained or will attain to perfection in the present life, no one can properly indulge the *expectation*. These two questions Mr. Mahan puts together into one, and then speaks of it as a *simple* question, and the question in debate; whereas it is *not* simple, and only a *part* of it is in debate. This mode of proceeding, instead of conducing to the end of free inquiry, tends to throw confusion into the whole discussion.

The same is true of the other parts of the passage above

quoted. After the general statement just noticed, Mr. Mahan goes on to exhibit the point at issue in various particulars, and most if not all of these, like the statement above mentioned, are made up of two points, to which we give different answers. He says: "One part" — those who agree with him, — "affirm, that the perfect obedience which God requires, we *may* render to him." But in the sense above given, *we* hold to this as well as they. "The other part affirm that it is *criminal* for us to expect to render that obedience." I wonder he should dress up our opinion in such startling language, — language which we never use, and which it is wrong for *him* to use. Why did he not say; the other part affirm that *it is not proper for us* to expect to render that obedience. But this is a mistake; for we do expect to render that perfect obedience after a while. He proceeds to state the point in another form. "One part affirm that we ought to *aim* at perfection in holiness, with the expectation of attaining to it. The other part affirm that we ought to aim at it with the certain expectation of not attaining to it." Here again are two points. As to the first, that "we ought to *aim* at perfection in holiness," we agree with him. As to the other point, the *expectation* of attaining to it, we differ, if the expectation respects the present life. It should, however, be kept in mind that, according to the common doctrine, all believers do expect *ultimately* to attain perfect holiness. Again, he says: "On the one hand, it is affirmed that we ought to pray that the God of peace will sanctify us wholly, etc., with the expectation that he will answer our prayers by the bestowment of that very blessing; on the other hand," that we ought to pray for perfect sanctification, "with the certain expectation of not receiving" it. This statement, like the others, fails of presenting fairly the point in debate. We affirm that we ought to pray God to sanctify us wholly, and to do it with the expectation that he will, at no distant period, bestow the very blessing we ask. But as to expecting the blessing to be fully granted in the *present life*, we differ from the advocates of perfection. Once more, he says: "On the one hand, it is affirmed that grace is provided," to render Christians, "even in this life, per-

fect in every good work." "On the other hand it is affirmed that no such grace is provided." This is not correct; for we hold that the grace provided and revealed in the gospel is all-sufficient and boundless, and that the present imperfection of believers is owing altogether to their own fault.

Mr. Mahan says, a little after: "The question is *entirely distinct* from the question, What attainments do Christians actually make?" I hardly know why he should say this, when, on the same page, he makes it one of the three questions connected with the nature and extent of the promises, whether "any have attained or will attain to entire sanctification in this life," and when it is so manifest in many places, that the other points he discusses are meant to bear directly upon this, and to end in it. He shows, very clearly, what is the main point as it lies in his *own mind*, when he says: "On the supposition," that perfect holiness is *not actually attained* in this life, "how can the position be sustained that it is *attainable?*" That is, he thinks it *not attainable*, if Christians do, in fact, fail of attaining it. With what reason, then, can he say, that the question in debate is *entirely distinct* from the question respecting the actual attainments of Christians? Did he think this last point attended with some special disadvantages to him, and did he, on that account, prefer to keep it rather out of sight, and to give prominence to those points which could be made more plausible? However this may be, intelligent readers will see, that the chief point at issue really is, *whether Christians do in fact attain to perfect sanctification during the present life.* And how can Mr. Mahan refuse to recognize this as the main point at issue, *if we choose to make it so?* Surely he would not compel us to dispute with him about the provisions and promises of the gospel, or the duty of praying for complete holiness, when we have as large views on these points as he has. If the advocates for the doctrine of perfection can fairly prove, that any Christians *actually attain to sinless perfection during the present life*, the common doctrine is overthrown, and the controversy is determined in their favor. But if they fail of showing this, all they can prove respecting other points will avail nothing.

And Mr. Mahan himself shows, in many ways, that he does after all regard it in this light, and that he values most of his other arguments on account of their supposed relation to this.

The question whether Christians are to *expect* perfect sanctification in this life, of which Mr. Mahan so often speaks, evidently depends on the question, whether there is evidence that any have attained or will attain to it. And we have seen that no such evidence can be derived from any of the topics of argument which we have examined. We are now to inquire whether there is other evidence of this.

Mr. Mahan says: "There is positive evidence that some did attain to a state of entire sanctification." The texts he produces are Gal. 2: 20; 1 Thes. 2: 10; 1 Cor. 4: 4; Acts 20: 26; Phil. 4: 9; 3: 7; 1 Cor. 11: 1; 1 John 3: 20; 4: 17, 18; Rev. 14: 4, 5; Is. 6: 5—8. He might have added 1 John 1: 7, 9; 2: 5; 3: 3, 9; and many others.

Now the Bible is a very precious book, and is worthy of being studied with the utmost care. Mr. Mahan is sensible of this, and in various instances shows, that he is not disposed to adopt that sense of a passage which first offers itself to the mind of the reader, but thinks it proper and necessary to look into the context, to compare different parts of Scripture, and to examine all the circumstances of the case, in order to discover the exact meaning which the sacred writers had in their own minds, and which they intended to convey to others. And although liable to err in the results of his inquiries, he is certainly right in thinking, that we cannot always determine the true meaning of particular texts, by the *sound* or even the *sense* of the words, *taken by themselves*, and that we are often unable to come to a just and satisfactory conclusion, without a careful, patient, and even protracted examination.

According to this just principle, the texts which seem, at first view, to assert or imply that believers attain to complete holiness in the present life, must be thoroughly examined, and their true meaning determined. And here it should be remembered, that the prophets and apostles wrote in a very free, unembarrassed

and artless manner. Their object was not to settle the disputes which have been got up by speculating, adventurous minds, but to give important instructions to men of teachable and honest hearts. Their manner of writing is such, that an advocate of Universalism, or Socinianism, or almost any other error, may find texts which, *taken alone*, will appear in his favor. The advocates of "Perfection," whom I believe to be in error, argue very plausibly in support of their doctrine, from a variety of passages, *construed in a particular way*. There are even more texts than they have mentioned, which may *appear* to favor their cause. They argue from the passages which set forth the provisions and promises of the gospel, and the prayers of believers. These passages, understood as they *possibly may be*, would seem to countenance the doctrine of perfection. But we must inquire, whether, on a fair examination, we can understand the passages in this way, consistently with other parts of the Bible, and with well known facts. The texts which Mr. Mahan quotes, and others which he might quote, *if taken by themselves, and understood in the highest and most absolute sense*, would clearly prove that at least some believers attain to perfect holiness in this life. Job was *a perfect* and upright man. Some are said to have followed the Lord *wholly*. God planted Israel *wholly* a right seed. Some walked in *all* the commandments and ordinances of God *blameless*. The blood of Christ cleanseth from *all* sin. The apostles behaved themselves holily and justly and unblamably, and exhorted others to copy their example. "A bishop must be *blameless*." "Let as many as be *perfect*, be thus minded." "Ye are *complete* in Christ." Paul and others *followed* Christ, and were *crucified* with Christ. Paul was free from the blood of all men. John speaks of those whose love was *perfect*, and whose hearts did not condemn them; and in the Apocalypse, he says of the hundred and forty and four thousand, that in their mouth is found no guile, and that they are *without fault* before the throne of God.

Now, the question is, What is the true meaning of these and other like texts? Are they to be taken in *the highest and most absolute* sense, or in a qualified sense? On the determination of this question the controversy chiefly depends.

First, then, I inquire how the sacred writers, *in other cases*, employ terms *like* those contained in these texts. And I soon find that they often employ them in a *qualified*, *restricted* sense. Thus, it is said that Joshua took the *whole* land of Canaan; though some parts still remained in the hands of the native tribes. The meaning doubtless is, that no *considerable* parts remained unsubdued, and that he proceeded, without molestation, to divide the land among the Israelites. It is said Judah was *wholly* carried away captive, though a remnant continued in the land. "Jerusalem, and all Judea, and the region round about Jordan, went out to John, and were baptized of him," which means, that there was a *general* or *very extensive* gathering of the people to him. Paul said: "*All* seek their own," although there were exceptions. Jeremiah says of the people; "They are *all* adulterers." Solomon says; "*All* things come alike to *all*." And it is repeatedly said, that "*all* flesh shall be saved." I find, then, that the sacred writers often use expressions of this kind in a *comparative* sense, or in a sense that is in some other way *restricted*. And what is more natural than to ask, whether it *may* not be so with the texts which seem favorable to the doctrine of "Perfection?" How do we know that those texts are meant to be understood in the highest and most absolute sense, when other texts, containing similar expressions, are necessarily understood in a *limited* sense?

But I proceed with the inquiry, and I find that some of the very texts which seem most favorable to the doctrine of "Perfection," are unquestionably to be taken in a *qualified* sense. And here I cannot but think that Mr. Mahan will agree with me. Job was a *perfect* man, and yet he showed plainly enough that *he was not without faults*. It is said of David that he followed the Lord *wholly*, except in the matter of Uriah. But his history and his confessions leave us in no doubt that he was chargeable with other sins, especially sins of heart. God planted Israel *wholly* a right seed. But it must be evident to all, that this expressed their character only in a *comparative* and *very limited* sense. "A bishop must be *blameless*." But neither Mr. Mahan nor any of his asso-

ciates, can think it essential to the character of a gospel minister, that he should be *absolutely sinless*. Paul said to the Colossians: "Ye are *complete* in Christ." But his Epistle to them shows that he did not think them *entirely without sin*.

I come, then, to this result. As a limited sense clearly belongs to some of the passages which seem, at first view, to favor the doctrine of "Perfection," it may *possibly* belong to *others*, and it would be going too fast and too far, to decide at once that *any* of that class of texts must be taken in the highest and most absolute sense.

In the next step of my inquiry, I fix my thoughts directly upon several of the texts which seem, at first view, most favorable to the doctrine of "Perfection." The texts I have in view are of no small moment, and I desire Mr. Mahan to join with me in a serious and unprejudiced examination of them, that we may discover what is the mind of the Holy Spirit.

I would then first ask my brother, whether his doctrine implies, that *all* true believers are *entirely sanctified*, either *now*, or *during the present life?* I know what his answer is; but I propose the question, for the purpose of bringing out distinctly the exact *nature* and *extent* of the doctrine. In his publications, Mr. Mahan does often enough, and plainly enough, and with too much justice, represent the great body of true Christians, as deplorably deficient in their piety; and he labors with earnestness, to excite them to make higher attainments. Indeed he claims complete holiness as a privilege enjoyed at present by only *a select few*, *a very small number*. I would then invite him to join with me in a careful examination of a few passages in the first Epistle of John. Let us begin with one of the texts which he quotes: "Ch. 1: 6, 7. The Apostle is here speaking of all true believers, whose character it is, not to walk in darkness, but to walk in the light. Referring to *all* these children of light, he says: "The blood of Christ cleanseth us from *all* sin." He now cleanseth us from all sin; for the verb is in the present tense. But Mr. Mahan does not understand it to mean that *all* real Christians are now cleansed from *all* sin, that is, *completely sanctified;* though he thinks the

text somehow favorable to his doctrine. But it is clear, that whatever the text asserts of *any* Christians, it asserts of *all*. Let us then come fairly to the point, and inquire what the text really means. Mr. Mahan will certainly be under the necessity of finding out *some qualified* sense, a sense consistent with what he regards as the real present state of *all believers;* for the text certainly relates to *all*. He may perhaps say, the blood of Christ *provides* for the entire cleansing of all believers *conditionally;* or that it *begins* the work of cleansing now, and secures its complete accomplishment *ultimately*. In this or some other way, he *must* give the text a restricted sense, a sense different from what would, at first glance, be suggested by the words themselves, taken alone. He must do the same with verse 9, in which the Apostle says, that, "if we confess our sins," as *all* Christians do, "he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from *all unrighteousness*." Does it mean that he *now* absolutely cleanseth all who confess their sins, that is, the whole body of believers, from *all unrighteousness?* Mr. Mahan will answer, no. What then can he do, but in some way to *limit* the sense? Again, ch. 2: 4, 5, the Apostle teaches, that every true believer keeps the word of God. And then he says; "*Whoso* keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God *perfected;* hereby know we that we are in him." He is evidently setting forth the character and state of *all* who are in Christ. Does Mr. Mahan think that the love of God is, in *his* sense, *perfect* in *all* true believers? No. He thinks it true of only a small number. But whatever the Apostle here asserts, he asserts equally of *every true Christian*. Will not Mr. Mahan then be compelled to find out some limitations of the sense, so as to make it apply to *all* true believers? Let him do this, and we shall see whether his interpretation of this text will not help us to the right interpretation of several others of a similar kind.

"Every man that hath this hope in him *purifieth himself, even as he is pure*." 1 John 3: 3. To be pure as Christ is pure is a high attainment, and is doubtless the same as is required in the command to *be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect*. I sup-

pose that every Christian does thus purify himself, that is, pursues a course of purification which will terminate in perfect purity. The expression, in my view, denotes not the particular degree of purification which the believer has already attained, but the *gradual process* of purification, and the *perfect purity* after which he aspires, and to which he will come *in the end.* As his ultimate perfection in moral purity is *certain*, it is spoken of as though it were already accomplished; — a manner of speaking which often occurs in Scripture. Thus, Peter, speaking of his condition in the present life, says; "Who am an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also *a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed;*" — a partaker *even now* of that *future glory by certain anticipation.* But how will Mr. Mahan explain the purity mentioned by the Apostle John, so that he may predicate it, as the Apostle does, of ALL Christians, and yet make it agree with the doctrine he maintains, that only a FEW are perfectly pure, while Christians in general are very far from perfect purity? If he says it means *complete purity;* then he cannot predicate it of *all* Christians, nor of the greater part. If he says, it means *that degree* or *that gradual process* of purification, which *does* belong to all true Christians, then he comes into the principle of *limiting* the sense. And if he gives a *limited* sense to this text, why not to all the other texts which appear to favor his doctrine?

But the most striking passage which I wish Mr. Mahan to examine is 1 John 3: 9. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Where, in all the Scriptures, can Mr. Mahan find another text, which seems to assert, so clearly and strongly as this, that Christians are *completely sanctified,* — *absolutely sinless?* It even declares that they are raised above the possibility of sinning. I am the more desirous of turning my brother's attention to this passage, because he seems somehow to have overlooked it. This oversight may be thought by some to be a matter of wonder, considering that the text, understood in the large and absolute sense, which Mr. Mahan is so fond of, would be a better proof of the complete sanctification of believers, in the

present life, than any texts he has quoted, I had almost said, than *all* he has quoted. The language is exceedingly plain and forcible. *Every believer*, we know, is born of God. And the text asserts, that "*whosoever* is born of God *sinneth not*, and *cannot sin*." True, if Mr. Mahan should introduce this, and argue from it as a *proof text*, it would give him trouble; because it would prove a great deal too much. It would go far beyond his scheme. Of course, if he should bring it forward, he would at once find himself in difficulty, and would be obliged to look out for some *limitations* of the sense. But anything like this would hurt his argument. According to his way of interpreting other texts, this would certainly prove, that *all* Christians, from the time of their regeneration, are entirely without sin. But this is what he does not believe. He would, therefore, find it necessary to qualify the sense, and to say that it cannot be understood absolutely — that it can only mean, that those who are born of God do not sin *habitually*, or *impenitently*, as others do, — or, that they cannot sin with their *whole heart*, — or, that they cease from sin *as far* as they are sanctified by the Spirit, and will, *in the end*, cease entirely. In one way or another, he would be obliged to limit the sense, so as to make it applicable to all Christians. But if he should do this, he would be constantly expecting to hear the question; *Why not give the same limitation to other texts, which use language far less emphatical, and which will much more easily admit of limitations?* So that, after all, he may have done wisely in slipping by the text.

The query has sometimes arisen in my mind, how Mr. Mahan would meet a man, who should maintain, on the ground of this and some other texts, that *all* believers on earth are absolutely free from sin, and do at once arrive at perfection. Such a man might frame his argument thus: "The Apostle Paul says of himself and of Christians generally, our old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. And he says of those who are thus crucified that they are *freed from sin*, and are *complete in Christ*. And the Apostle John says, that the blood of Christ cleanseth

believers *from all sin*, and that they purify themselves, *even as Christ is pure.* He speaks of this as a general fact; and he says still more plainly and forcibly, that whosoever is born of God, as every Christian is, doth not commit sin, and cannot sin. Now why should Mr. Mahan take upon him to contradict the apostles, and to hold that any man is a true believer who falls short of complete sanctification? Why confine the present attainment of sinless perfection to a few extraordinary saints, when the infallible word of God attributes it to *all* believers?" It would be gratifying to know what reply Mr. Mahan would make.

We will now proceed with our examination, making it our object to determine the true meaning of the texts which seem most favorable to the doctrine of "Perfection." And here, I think, we shall be satisfied, that in some of the texts the language used is intended to set forth the *sincerity* or *uprightness* of believers, in distinction from hypocrites, and also their freedom from any such offences as would expose their public character to discredit, or their piety to suspicion. Job was *perfect* and *upright.* The two words are doubtless of the same general import, denoting real *integrity* or *goodness.* In several instances the Psalmist uses the strong language of self-justification, and seems at first view to say, he is not chargeable with any sin, when his meaning evidently is, that he is innocent of the crimes which his enemies laid to his charge. Even if at any time he was not conscious of any particular sins, he was aware that he was liable to mistake, and apprehended that there might still be some concealed evil in his heart; and with a view to this, he prayed God to search him, and see if there was any wicked way in him. In some cases, pious men under the former dispensation are said to have followed the Lord *wholly*, when the obvious meaning is, that they kept themselves from idolatry, and adhered uniformly to the worship of the true God. When the New Testament writers speak of *perfection*, they often refer to a state of *maturity* or *manhood* in knowledge or in holiness, in distinction from a state of *childhood*, — a state of *advancement* in piety, in distinction from the common state of *new converts;* and sometimes they refer to the purity and blessedness

of heaven, which is the high object to which all Christians aspire. But in no case do the circumstances require that the language employed should be understood to denote complete sanctification, *as actually attained in the present life.* Now such being the fact, Mr. Mahan surely has reason to hesitate, and to go into a thorough examination of the subject, before he relies upon any of the texts which he cites as proofs of his doctrine.

But it is so indescribably important to obtain a right understanding of the Scriptures, that we cannot pursue our inquiries with too much diligence and care. Let us then go forward with our examination, and see whether the sacred writers will not, in *other ways* not yet mentioned, help us to determine in what light they looked upon Christians in the present life, and how their language in the texts referred to is to be understood.

Are we not then plainly taught, by the current representations of the inspired writers, that the religion of God's people throughout the present life *is progressive*, beginning at their conversion, and advancing from one degree of holiness to another, till they arrive at a state of perfect purity and blessedness in heaven? Is not the description which the Apostle gives (1 Cor. xiii,) of the progress of believers from partial to perfect *knowledge*, equally applicable to their progress in *piety?* This is plainly indicated by the fact that the same Apostle expressly requires believers to *grow in grace*, as well as in *knowledge.* Can it be supposed that there were any Christians in the Apostle's day, who had no need to grow in grace, and to whom that precept did not belong? How plainly does the Apostle show, that he regarded religion as *progressive*, by what he says to Christians at Philippi; — "Being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it" — *will be performing it*, or *bringing it to a completion*, "until the day of Christ." The work of sanctification was begun, and was to be *in a course of accomplishment* — was to be *finishing until the day of Christ*, when it would be perfected. So the Psalmist viewed it; "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." Had the Apostle considered the good work as fully accomplished already, he would naturally have said;

— Being confident of this, that he who has begun and completed a good work in you, will keep you in that state of complete holiness until the day of Christ. But instead of this, he represents the *finishing* of the good work as what God was *still to do*. In accordance with all this, he shortly after prays that their "love may abound yet *more and more*." In another place he speaks of all believers as changed into the image of Christ *from glory to glory*. So it is set forth in the Old Testament, "The path of the just is as the shining light, shining *more and more* to the perfect day." The writer to the Hebrews exhorts believers to "follow holiness." Mr. Mahan thinks the perfection mentioned, Phil. 3: 12, is the final state of blessedness in heaven. If this is the prominent sense of the passage, "following after" it denotes the strenuous efforts he made through life, to obtain it, as a *future good*, — efforts like those which a man in a race makes to obtain the prize. Now believers, in the passage just referred to in Hebrews, are directed by the same word, to "follow after holiness," — clearly implying that it is not yet fully attained, but is still to be an object of pursuit. It will be noted, that the writer calls those to whom he wrote, "*holy*." They were so, as all believers are, *in a measure*. For them to "follow after holiness" was to aim at *higher* measures of it, — to aspire to that *perfection* of holiness which they had not attained. This was enjoined upon *all Christians;* showing clearly what was in the mind of the inspired writer as to their real condition. If there had been any who were already perfect in holiness, how could they have been directed to "follow after" it, as an object to be obtained by future exertions? The same word is used by Paul to Timothy: "*Follow after* righteousness, goodness, faith, love, patience, meekness." Timothy had all these virtues in a degree; but he was to "follow after" them with a view to *higher* attainments.

The *progressive* nature of holiness in Christians is implied in all the texts which speak of their spiritual *warfare*. In this warfare they are unceasingly to oppose every kind of evil, especially the evil in their own hearts. "Their warfare is within." In this warfare all Christians are engaged. The most advanced are not

exempt. The Apostle does indeed say, that Christians are already crucified and dead to sin. But keep in mind that he says this of *all* Christians. Keep in mind too, that he exhorts the same Christians to *put off* the old man which is corrupt, and to *put on* the new man; to *be transformed* by the renewing of their minds, and to *put on* Christ — urging all this as *a duty still to be done.* In like manner, he represents all Christians as *renewed;* and yet exhorts them *to be renewed.* It all shows, that the work of dying to sin is *begun*, and is to be *constantly advanced;* that at their conversion they are *renewed*, and that so long as they live they are to be renewed *more and more.* If the texts which represent Christians as renewed, dead to sin, etc., are understood to imply that the work of renovation is *completed*, what can be the meaning of the other texts, which enjoin the same thing upon *all* Christians, *as a duty still to be done?* And I must again request Mr. Mahan and others, from whom I am constrained to differ, to consider well, and not to forget, that the most important texts which seem to favor their doctrine relate, not to a few Christians of extraordinary attainments, but to *all* Christians. And if they imply that sanctification is at present complete, they imply that it is so with the whole body of believers. My brethren then will be under the necessity of adopting the *qualified* sense which I have given of the texts, or of going a step further, and maintaining, that *all* real Christians are now perfectly holy. If they allow themselves in serious, unfettered thought, they cannot long retain their present position.

But there is another class of texts, which will afford additional aid in determining how we are to regard the present condition of good men. I refer to those which represent *their desires after holiness.* It is the very nature of *desire* to aspire after a *future good* — a good not yet obtained. According to the Scriptures, it is characteristic of all the followers of Christ, that they *hunger and thirst after righteousness;* that is, they have a strong desire for *complete holiness;* which implies that they have not yet obtained it. If in any part of their life, they were already "filled," why should they "*hunger and thirst?*" When David said;

"My soul *thirsteth and panteth* for God," did not his desires fix upon a good which he did not then fully enjoy?

Consider also *the prayers* which believers offer up for themselves. No part of the Bible exhibits a more striking view of the devout exercises of the believer's heart, than Psalm cxix. In various ways, it expresses the sincerest reverence and love for the divine law, and the most determined obedience; and, at the same time, a reaching after what had not yet been obtained. "O that my feet were directed to keep thy statutes! Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all thy commandments. My soul cleaveth to the dust; quicken thou me according to thy word. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not unto covetousness. Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken me in thy way. I have seen an end of all perfection; but thy commandment is exceeding broad. I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments." Language like this undoubtedly expresses the moral state and exercises of all true believers on earth. It is the language of those who, with warm desire and strong purpose of heart, are following after complete sanctification. As to the true meaning and intent of the language, let the wisest and best men who use it be the judges. It is easy to invent novel and eccentric interpretations of the Bible. But novelties and eccentricities will wax old and vanish away; while common sense and Christian experience and the teaching of the Holy Spirit will guide into all the truth.

Consider too, *the prayers which Christ and the apostles offered up for the whole body of believers.* Jesus said: "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil. *Sanctify them through thy truth.*" The work of sanctification was begun in them. Jesus prayed that it might be advanced and perfected. So when Mr. Mahan, and the followers of Christ generally, pray God to *sanctify* their fellow Christians, they doubtless fix their desires upon a degree of sanctification not yet attained. Jesus prayed also that believers might be *one* — referring to a degree of union far above what then existed, or ever has existed since that time.

The first Christians were in circumstances highly favorable to eminent holiness. The great truths of the gospel came to their understandings and hearts in all their beauty and freshness, from the lips of inspired apostles, unadulterated by human mixtures, and attended with the extraordinary power of the Holy Spirit. No doubt they did attain to a remarkable degree of faith and obedience, and may properly be regarded as patterns of piety to Christians in following ages. But how were the apostles accustomed to *pray* for them? And what must have been the desires and aims implied in their prayers?

After addressing the Christians at Thessalonica, who had truly received the gospel, and in whom it worked effectually; and after calling them his joy and crown, and telling them that he and his fellow-laborers, in all their afflictions, were comforted over them by their faith; the Apostle says: "Praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might *perfect* that which is *lacking* in your *faith*." And then he adds: "The Lord make you to *increase* and abound in love towards one another, and towards all men, to the end he may establish your hearts in holiness." Again, in the same Epistle; "The God of peace sanctify you *wholly*." So in Heb. 13: 21, "The God of peace — *make you perfect* in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight." In another place; "The Lord *direct* your hearts *into* the love of God." He also prayed that God would *fulfil* in them all "the good pleasure of his goodness." For the Ephesians he prayed, that God would grant unto them "to be strengthened with might by his Spirit" — that they might "know the love of Christ," and "be filled with all the fulness of God." He expressed the same devout desires for the Colossians. And to the Corinthians he says: "I pray God that ye do no evil;" "And this also we *wish*, even your perfection."

Now what was implied in these prayers for primitive believers? The same unquestionably, as is commonly implied, when similar prayers are offered up at the present day. Devout ministers and Christians everywhere pray for believers, for *all* believers, that their hearts may be directed into the love of God; that their love

may *increase;* that God would *sanctify* them, and sanctify them *wholly;* and that they may be filled with all the fulness of God. And if Mr. Mahan and other Christians will look into their own hearts, and see what they really mean, when they offer up such prayers, they will be likely to know what the apostles meant. We have no evidence that the disciples ever prayed in *any* way for their Lord and Master. But if they prayed for him at all, did they ever pray for him in *this* manner? He offered up prayer to God for *himself.* But did he ever pray, that his love might *increase* and *abound*, and that God would *sanctify* him *wholly?* The prayers which Christ and the apostles offered up, and which are now offered up, and doubtless will be to the end of time, for the whole body of believers, evidently imply, that whatever their attainments may be, they do and always will, while here below, fall short of perfect sanctification; and that all the saints on earth are and will be in such a state, that they will always do, what Jesus never did, make continual *confession of sin*, and continually offer up *the sacrifice of a broken heart* and a *contrite spirit*, as the sacrifice which God approves, *till they arrive at heaven.*

One thing more. All Christians suffer *affliction.* And what is the meaning and design of affliction? "The Lord does not afflict willingly the children of men, but for their profit, that they may be partakers of his holiness." "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes." The design of affliction is set forth with special clearness in Heb. xii. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. What son is he whom the father chasteneth not? If ye be without chastisement, then are ye bastards, and not sons." And the writer adds, that God chastens us "for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness." What now must be our conclusion, but this that as all Christians on earth endure affliction, which is always designed as *chastisement*, they all *need* it as a means of improving their character. Mr. Mahan's "reply" to this argument directly confirms it. Speaking of the rod of our heavenly Father, he says: "Its object is to render us partakers of his holiness. *Till* this end is accomplished, the rod

will be used. *When* this end is accomplished, it will no more be used." Who could express the sentiment of the sacred writer better? This is the view which gives all its force to the argument. *Till* believers are made partakers of God's holiness, the rod is used. *When* this is fully accomplished, *the rod is no more used.* Who now has this evidence of complete conformity to the divine holiness? Has Mr. Mahan, or Mr. Fitch, or any who agree with them? Are they free from affliction? Can they say that the rod is no more used with them? But would they any longer endure chastisement, if sanctification, which is the object of it, were fully accomplished? If any of them are indeed "*without* chastisement" what does the Scripture say of them? Now chastisement, if just, always implies some fault in the one who is chastised. When you see a wise and good father correcting his children, you know that he sees something amiss in them. And as divine chastisement is continued to all believers, as long as life lasts, it must be that God sees in them some fault to be corrected, or some moral deficiency to be supplied. When the end of chastisement is fully accomplished, Mr. Mahan truly says, "It will no more be used."

Now, the last and generally the greatest affliction, which believers suffer, is *death.* And why may not this, as well as all preceding afflictions, be intended by a wonder-working God, for their benefit, that they may, in a higher degree than before, be partakers of his holiness? Being the last, and a most remarkable case of suffering, why may it not be the means of completing their sanctification; and so the means of working out for them, in the last instance, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory? On the very principle laid down by Mr. Mahan, as well as by the sacred writers, why is it not reasonable to conclude, that the whole end of suffering is not accomplished *before* death, but is accomplished *at* death; and that this is the reason why there is no affliction after death? And how common has it been for the wisest and best of men to look upon death in this light, and to anticipate the event, however painful, as a blessing — a means of delivering them from all remains of depravity, and of finishing in them the work of prepar-

ation for heaven! *So long as they are in this tabernacle, they groan, being burdened.* And what burden so great as sin? The time when they expect to be like Christ, that is, perfectly so, is the time when he shall appear, and when they shall see him as he is.

I marvel that Mr. Mahan treats this common view of the subject as he does. He calls it *absurd*, and thinks he can dispose of it by a single stroke. To overthrow the doctrine that the work of sanctification is completed at death, he uses two arguments. "First, the grace which sanctifies believers amid the gloom and wreck and distraction of dissolving nature, would, if applied, have sanctified them at an earlier period." Undoubtedly it would have done it, "*if applied.*" But what if it was *not* applied? And how does Mr. Mahan know that it may not have seemed good in the sight of God to apply it at the time of dissolution, rather than *before?* May not this be one of the unsearchable things in the divine dispensation? And why did not Mr. Mahan see how easily he might disprove the Scripture doctrine which *he* believes — that *Christians are sanctified by means of the common afflictions of life?* He might say: "The same grace which sanctifies the believer amid the gloom" and distress of heavy affliction, "would, *if applied*, have sanctified him before." And by this argument he might prove, in opposition to the sacred writers and to himself, that God does *not* sanctify believers by means of affliction; — yes, he might verily prove, that God does not sanctify believers by means of *chastisement*, *because* the grace, which sanctifies them by such means, would, *if applied*, have sanctified them before. In the same way, he might prove that *sinners* are not, in any case, *converted* by means of preaching, because the grace which converts them by that means, would, *if applied*, have converted them at an earlier period! His second argument is this: "No other reason can be assigned for this grace" (the grace which would wholly sanctify believers before death) "being withheld, but the supposition that God can better glorify himself and his kingdom be better advanced, by saints partially than wholly sanctified." The argument, plainly stated and carried out, stands thus:

There is no reason why God should not bestow the grace which would wholly sanctify believers during the present life, but the supposition, that he is better glorified by their partial, than by their entire sanctification. And as this supposition is inadmissible, therefore God does *not* withhold but *actually bestows* the grace which wholly sanctifies believers during the present life. Now try this argument, and see how it would work in other cases. Would not God be more glorified, if all Christians should be perfectly holy *to-day*, than if they should remain partially holy? Must he not then actually give them the grace, which will *make* them perfectly holy to-day? Again, would not God have been better glorified, if Mr. Mahan and other Christians had been converted at an earlier period of their life? If so, then there was no reason why he should withhold the grace which would have converted them earlier. And as he *does* nothing and *omits* nothing without reason, it must be that he actually bestowed the grace which converted them earlier; that is, bestowed the grace which converted them before they were converted. Once more. Mr. Mahan thinks that he was a wanderer from the right way, while he was a member of the Seminary; and in his charitable judgment, all his fellow-students were in so low and lamentable a state, that "not a single individual," out of so large a number, "enjoyed daily communion and peace with God." Surely Mr. Mahan thinks God would, at that time, have been more glorified by his complete holiness and that of his brethren, than by their very partial holiness. Must it not then have been the fact, that God did actually give them the grace which *made* them completely holy? But as this grace was not given, and as he thinks there could have been no other reason for not giving it than the one he mentions, must not his conclusion be, that it was withheld without any reason?

I have dwelt so long on this point, to show that this mode of reasoning involves the most glaring falsities, and leads to the most dangerous results. What shipwreck will any one make of the truth, who argues in this manner! It is going beyond our province, and attempting to intrude ourselves irreverently into those

secret things which belong only to God. Why should we take upon us to determine, by our own fallible judgment, what the dispensations of God will be? We know what the Lord requires of *us*, — that we should glorify him by constant and entire obedience. But how he will see fit to glorify *himself* in his sovereign providence, is another question. And who is able to compare the different ways in which God may do this, and to determine by his own reason, which God will prefer? Who is authorized to say, that God will not overrule the sinfulness which remains in his own children to the end of life, so as to make it the means of honoring in the highest degree his own infinite wisdom and grace? By this and all the other acts of his government, he will cause the world to know, that he is God. How admirable will his forbearance and mercy appear to his people hereafter, when they remember that they carried with them to the very gate of heaven, so much that was offensive in his sight! What wonder, love, and praise will fill their illuminated and purified souls, when they call to mind their own deficiencies, and the long continued perverseness of their hearts, and then think of that redeeming grace, the aboundings of which rose so far above the aboundings of sin!

Finally. I make my appeal to *the consciousness of the most advanced Christians*, — the Baxters, the Mathers, the Brainerds, the Edwardses, the Martyns and the Paysons, — Christians who have probably risen as high in their spiritual attainments, as the most favored of those who maintain the doctrine of Perfection; and I could show, from their own repeated and humble confessions, that they all had a deep and growing sense of remaining depravity; that they always abhorred themselves on account of indwelling sin, and felt the need of pardoning and sanctifying grace, even to the end of life. And the sacred writers show, in the various ways above mentioned, and in other ways, that they had the same conviction as to their own state, and the state of all the saints on earth. I might refer to John, who asserts that it would be false for believers to say, they have *no sin*, and immediately speaks of their *confessing* their sins, and of the readiness of God to *pardon* and *cleanse* them; — all showing that he meant to speak of

what they were at the time he wrote. The writers of the New Testament manifestly had the same views with Solomon, who said, in the midst of a solemn, public prayer, "there is no man that sinneth not," and who afterwards repeated the same sentiment; "there is not a just man on earth who doeth good and sinneth not."

Such is the examination which we have pursued in order to ascertain the true meaning of the texts which seem, at first view, to favor the doctrine of "Perfection." I have not presumed to determine this in a moment; but have felt it to be necessary, in so important a matter, to search the Scriptures, and to compare one part with another, so that, if possible, I might be able to determine exactly what is the mind of the inspired writers, and what is the doctrine they mean to teach respecting the subject under consideration.

In this examination we have found, 1. That the Scriptures in other cases frequently employ terms similar to those used in these texts, in a *restricted sense.* We conclude therefore, that they *may* proceed on the same principle here. The most literal, absolute sense *may* not be the sense intended. 2. As to some of the texts referred to, the circumstances of the case clearly forbid us to understand them in the literal and absolute sense. And our conclusion is, that the same *may* be true in respect to the other texts, though for reasons less obvious. 3. The terms used in some of the texts are evidently designed to express the *integrity* of true believers, in distinction from hypocrites; or their freedom from *particular sins* which were charged upon them by others, or to which they were exposed; or the *maturity* of their religious character, compared with its commencement; or perhaps the fact, that they had *all the essential parts of the new man*, though in an imperfect state. In no case is the highest sense of the words absolutely required. 4. The *current* language of the sacred writers in a variety of respects implies, that the piety of believers during the present life is *progressive.* 5. Complete holiness is represented as an object of *desire* to believers, — desire from its very nature fixing upon a *future* good — a good not yet possessed.

6. Complete holiness is an object of the *prayers* which the saints offered up for themselves and for one another; implying that it was regarded as a *good, not yet obtained.* 7. *Affliction*, or chastisement, which is intended as a means of sanctification, is continued to believers up to the very close of life; implying that, so long as life lasts, they have remaining sinfulness which calls for it. 8. The most advanced saints have been *conscious* of the imperfection of their holiness.

Now do not all these plain instructions and representations, both separately and unitedly, make known the real spiritual state of the people of God during the present life? Do they not show very satisfactorily, that it was not the design of the sacred writers to teach the doctrine, that the saints as a body, or any part of them, actually attain to sinless perfection here? And must we not therefore understand all the texts which, at first view, seem to favor the doctrine of "Perfection," in a *qualified* or *comparative* sense, a sense corresponding with the general teachings of the Bible, as to the actual state of believers in the present world?

To guard against everything which might appear questionable or inconclusive, I have thus far framed my argument without any reference to Rom. 7: 14—25. And yet, if the Apostle intends to speak of himself in his renewed state, the passage affords an argument of the first importance in support of the common doctrine. I cannot now enter into the controversy respecting this passage. Highly respectable writers are found on both sides. I can only say, that I agree with those who consider the Apostle as setting forth his own state and the state of others, as true believers. The reasons which satisfy me, are briefly given by the two most recent expositors in our own country, Hodge and Barnes. The considerations which are of most weight are these. 1. This is the sense which appears the most obvious and natural to common readers. 2. The language of the Apostle is well suited to express the exercises of the best men with whom I have ever been acquainted. And, so far as I know, those who have made the highest attainments in piety, have spoken of themselves most

freely in the very language of the Apostle. 3. Some of the expressions cannot, without difficulty, be made to apply to the unrenewed. 4. The same conflict, which is here described, is set forth very plainly, and in similar language, in Gal. 5: 17, a passage which, by common consent, is applied to Christians.

Now if the other evidence in support of the common doctrine were in any way deficient, the passage from Rom. vii. would, in my view, supply the deficiency, and would at once make known the real doctrine of the Scriptures. According to this passage, the state of Christians in this life is one of constant conflict between sin and holiness, the old and the new man; a state of high aims and endeavors, but of comparatively low attainments; and while, in view of the power and grace of Christ, they rejoice and give thanks, and are confident of a final and speedy victory; they have reason also, when they look at the remains of sin in their own hearts, to abhor themselves and repent in dust and ashes.

Consider how different the result of this examination would be, if we had found all the evidence which exists in support of the common doctrine, to be on the other side, going directly to confirm the doctrine of "Perfection." The question is: How are we to understand those texts which seem at first view to assert the present perfection of believers? Now suppose we had found nothing, either in the texts themselves or in any other part of the Bible, to show that the terms employed are ever to be taken in any other than the most absolute sense; suppose we had found that the current representations of the sacred writers clearly imply that believers in general, at least the better part of them, are now without sin; that their piety, instead of being progressive, comes to perfection at once; suppose we had found, that believers, instead of desiring and panting after complete holiness, have always been in the habit of congratulating themselves as already possessing it; and that, instead of earnestly praying for it, they have habitually thanked the Lord, that he had already bestowed it upon them; suppose we had found that their struggle with indwelling sin is past, their warfare ended; that they have no more chastisement,

and of course no faults that call for it; and suppose it to be the belief, the inward consciousness of Christians, especially of those most distinguished for their piety, that they have already attained to a state of sinless perfection; suppose all this to be true; how different would be our conclusion! We should at once agree to give all the texts referred to the largest and most absolute sense. And instead of disputing against "the doctrine of Christian Perfection," we should carry it much higher than its present advocates do. But what shall we say, and what will the advocates of the doctrine say, when it is seen that the evidence is all on the other side?

As to the many remaining topics of remark introduced by Mr. Mahan and his associates, I shall confine myself to those which seem to be of chief consequence, and shall dispose of them as briefly as possible.

It is mentioned by Mr. Mahan, as a proof of Paul's complete sanctification, that he exhorts Christians to *copy his example* — to be followers of him as he was of Christ. The argument is, that he could not have held himself up as an example, had he not been perfectly free from sin.

On this I remark, that Paul speaks of the Thessalonian Christians much in the same manner in this respect, as he does of himself. "Ye became followers of us and of the Lord, so that ye *became ensamples* to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia." He also speaks with approbation of the Thessalonians, as *followers of the churches in Judea*, implying that those churches were worthy of imitation. This argument then would prove that the mass of believers in Thessalonica and Judea were perfectly sanctified; which is much more than any man will assert.

My next remark is, that Paul and the Thessalonians and other Christians being held up as examples, does not necessarily imply more than that they were distinguished for piety in general, or for some particular branch of it. It is the same at the present day. If any man, a parent, a minister, or other Christian, exhibits the character of goodness more uniformly and conspicuously than is common, who hesitates to speak of him as an *example* of goodness,

and to exhort others to the duty of imitation? Our meaning is, not that he is without any fault; far from it; but that he is a good example *in the main*, or as to the *prominent traits of his character*, or as to *what is visible*. Thus Leighton, Baxter, Doddridge, Edwards, Brainerd, Payson, and others, are often spoken of as safe and useful examples. But who has any idea that they were *perfectly sanctified?* Who knows not that they were conscious of many sinful imperfections? Undoubtedly the sacred writers were accustomed to speak in the same *qualified sense*. Nothing can be more manifestly contrary to all just principles of interpretation and of reasoning, than to force the sense of a Scripture word or phrase *to the highest possible pitch*, and then to argue from that extreme sense, as though it were the *true* sense, in support of some uncommon opinion.

Mr. Mahan thinks much of the *practical effects* of his doctrine; and he represents those who do not embrace it, as making void God's law by their traditions. He seems to think that the most eminent saints on earth have done nothing effectually towards their own sanctification, because they have not been in possession of the grand secret of efficient holy action. He says: "Who would expect an army to fight under the impression of inevitable defeat?" — thus *misrepresenting* our views, and taking advantage of the misrepresentation to discredit our doctrine, and to give plausibility to his own. Again, not seeming to be at all sensible how strangely and totally he misrepresents the great body of ministers and Christians, he first asserts that his doctrine involves the principle which is considered essential to efficient action, and then says; "the belief that, as a matter of fact, we never shall attain to a certain state, renders it impracticable to aim at it;" and he speaks of it as "the testimony of universal consciousness, that no man ever did or can aim, or intend to reach a point, which he fully believes to lie beyond the line of *all* expectation." He asks, what more effectual means a parent could take to prevent the obedience of a child, than to require that child to believe that he will *never* render that obedience. When Mr. Mahan talks thus, it must be understood that he means to put

down the doctrine of his opponents. But who among them believes anything like what he thus implicitly charges upon them? Can he say, and does he mean to say, that we believe we *never* shall attain to perfect holiness; and that perfect holiness is entirely beyond our expectation? He certainly does *not* mean to say this. He only intends to say, we do not expect to attain it *during the present life.* Then why does he not take care to say just what he *means* to say? And why does he, by misstating our doctrine, give an appearance of strength to his arguments, when a true statement would leave his arguments, not only without strength, but without any *appearance* of it? If his readers suppose that such is our belief, — and his language might lead some to this supposition, — they will conclude at once that we are in a very sad condition. But it is surely a very different thing to say, we believe we *never* shall attain to perfect holiness, from what it is to say, we do not expect to attain to it in a *day*, or during *the short period of the present life.* The fact is, that Christians in general *believe* and *expect* that they shall attain to complete holiness, as really as the advocates of Perfection. And I undertake to say, that our expectation is far more *confident* and *certain*, than that which our opponents are so fond of indulging. If we are true Christians, we can say; "We *know*, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him." Here is a hope which has no mixture of doubt or uncertainty, and is rightly called *knowledge.* Though Mr. Mahan signifies that complete holiness is entirely beyond our expectation, we do expect it, and expect it soon. We believe that we shall, in a little while, be free from all remains of sin, and be completely changed into the image of Christ. We hope to reach this blessed state shortly, perhaps to-morrow. "We now groan, being burdened;" and we often cry out: "Who shall deliver us from the body of this death?" But we confidently look for deliverance. Yet a little while, and the day of victory will come. Has Mr. Mahan still to learn what joy, yea, what ecstasy of joy, devout Christians often experience, from the hope of speedily attaining to perfect holiness in heaven; and how they reach forward and press on towards it, putting forth their highest efforts in

the pursuit? He thinks the perfection, which Paul speaks of as the object of his desire, was the heavenly state, and not anything he could reach in the present world; and yet he sees that this circumstance did not prevent him from exerting all his powers in the pursuit of it. Had he adopted the same principle here, as in the case under consideration, he would have said; the Apostle must have expected to attain to the perfect state he aimed at, *in the present life*, or he could have had no motive to pursue it. He would have said, too, that Paul believed he *never* should attain to it, because he did not expect to attain to it here below, and, therefore, that he could put forth no vigorous endeavors after it, being destitute of the only principle of efficient action. If he allows that Paul had a faith which gave reality to *future glory*, and brought it near, and that, under the influence of such a faith, he made great exertions to obtain it; why not allow the same to be true with Christians generally in regard to that *complete moral purity*, which they look upon as an essential part of future glory? Why may they not exert themselves diligently in the pursuit, although, in their view, it is not to be fully attained within the short space of the present life? The Apostle John brings out the principle concerned in this matter with perfect plainness, and speaks of it familiarly, as a thing well understood in his day. He tells us what the assured hope of believers is: "We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him;" and then adds: "And every man that hath this hope in him," (the hope of being perfectly like Christ in heaven,) "purifieth himself, even as he is pure." The object was not to be reached in this life. But did this circumstance prevent primitive believers from laboring to purify themselves, and to become like Christ? Far from it. And it is my persuasion, that this *future* perfection in holiness, connected as it is with the unseen glories of the upper world, has a far more commanding influence upon devout Christians, and rouses them to higher efforts after complete sanctification, than the expectation which Mr. Mahan and his associates indulge, of obtaining perfect holiness in the present world. In the first place, the *object* of our hope is far *higher* and *nobler* than the object of

theirs. They are led, by the position they take, to lower down their object, that is, *Christian Perfection*, so as to bring it within their reach, and to make it just that which they have attained, or are likely to attain in the present state. For consistency sake, they are obliged to do this, and they have begun to do it. But it is a bold and perilous attempt. The law of God cannot bend; and those who undertake to bend it, know not what they do. The moral law will not adapt its requirements to our mistakes, or to our low attainments. And it certainly is a dangerous and daring thing for any man to take such ground, — as the advocates of "Perfection" evidently do, — that they will feel themselves urged, for the sake of consistency, to represent their own attainments as being the perfect holiness which God's law requires. Now let those, who hold to the Oberlin doctrine, come up, as some of them have done, to that which they consider to be "Christian Perfection;" and what further influence can the *expectation* of complete holiness have upon them? *Expectation* is superseded by *enjoyment*. And what occasion for efforts to *obtain* that which they already *possess?* They may pursue other objects; but they have already reached entire conformity to the divine law; and there can be no place for further efforts after that which is already obtained. Where, then, is their only principle of efficient action? Look now at that state of perfect spiritual purity, that complete likeness to Christ, which is the high object of desire and expectation with Christians generally. How evident it is that we shall be stimulated to pursue it with an intensity of effort, proportioned to the sublimity and excellence of the object.

But, in the second place, this expectation of ours stands before us in close connection with circumstances which make a strong appeal to the principles of the human mind, and powerfully move the springs of human action. That perfect holiness, to which we are taught to aspire, is associated in our thoughts with the ineffable joys and glories of the world above, with the presence of the exalted Saviour, and with things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived, — an object inexpressibly excellent and attractive in itself, and surrounded with invisible and celestial

glories. Oh! how much deeper interest does it produce in the mind, and how much more powerfully does it excite the active energies of our spiritual nature, than the low attainments which man ever has made, or ever will make, in this state of ignorance and error and moral defilement! That perfection which is actually attained by Christians, feeble and inconstant like ourselves, is, in sober truth, an object *too near*, *too familiar*, *too human*, yes, and *too easily obtained*, to take hold of our minds with the strongest grasp, and to elicit our mightiest energies. But tell Christians of the glorious appearing of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and inspire them with the hope of being like him when they shall see him as he is; the hope of being then adorned with all the beauties of holiness, of sitting with Christ on his throne, and dwelling forever in that blessed but unseen world, in which no sin shall be found; and you may be sure that they will hunger and thirst after righteousness, and will give all diligence to purify themselves, and to prepare for a heaven so holy and so glorious.

Thirdly; the expectation, which Christians generally entertain, has greatly the advantage over that which the Oberlin doctrine inspires, in respect to *certainty*. Those who act under the influence of that doctrine aim at perfect holiness, with a hope and expectation of attaining to it in the present world. But is their expectation entirely free from *doubt*, and attended with *certainty?* Can they say, we *know* that we shall attain to perfection before this short life is ended? Are they certain that they shall *do* that which will insure complete sanctification — that they shall fulfil the conditions on which the blessing is promised? Those among them who have not yet reached perfection, would, I presume, think it going too far to say, that they certainly *know* they shall reach it in the present world. And those who cherish the pleasing, but, as I apprehend, delusive idea, that they have already reached that state, would probably be backward to say, they *certainly know* that they shall *continue* in it. But the expectation, which believers generally indulge, is attended with *certainty*. They *know*, that if they are true Christians, they shall reach

their object, and shall reach it soon; that when they are absent from the body, they shall be present with the Lord, and shall then be holy as he is holy. Now until those who embrace the Oberlin doctrine are able to entertain an expectation of complete holiness in this life, which rises to *certainty;* it must be evident to them that, on their own principles, the hope which we indulge has a real advantage over their hope of perfection, in point of *practical influence.* And if I mistake not, they themselves will, after all, feel the value of the common doctrine, and be sometimes driven to take refuge in it. For they will, in all probability, have seasons of doubting whether they have attained or shall attain to perfection in this world. And when they are disturbed with such doubts, what can they do but resort to the comforting truth, that though they may fail of reaching complete holiness here, they shall reach it in heaven? And a small portion of true faith will bring the perfection of the heavenly state *very near.*

I have sometimes tried to account for it, that Mr. Mahan's doctrine exerts so mighty an influence over his mind, and the minds of others, calling forth energies and imparting joys before unknown. He will allow me to say, that I cannot ascribe this to the *truth of his doctrine;* for I do not consider the doctrine to *be* true. And I would not undertake to pry into the secret chambers of his mind, and to judge of the unwonted movements which have been going on there. But there is a principle implanted in our common nature, which operates powerfully in such a case, and in some minds *very* powerfully. When a philosopher or a navigator makes a discovery, he is filled with emotions which can hardly be described; and he publishes it abroad with a zeal proportioned to his view of its importance. And its importance will be likely to rise very high, in his view, from the circumstance that *he* is the discoverer. The doctrine of perfection has indeed been long before the public. But Mr. Mahan appears not to have received it at second hand. It came to him as a new discovery. Suddenly, and in a remarkable manner, his eyes were opened, and he saw the freeness and fulness of gospel grace, and the way in which a believer can at once obtain complete sanctification. Now

I would not for the world trifle with those serious operations of his mind; for I trust that the Spirit of God was with him, and that he did actually attain to a more entire consecration of himself to God than before. But who can be sure that he was not more or less elated with the new discovery? Even the Apostle Paul — who in Mr. Mahan's view was perfect — even that great Apostle was in danger of being exalted above measure with the revelations made to him, when he was caught up to the third heaven. And it was found to be necessary that he should have a very humbling and long-continued affliction, a thorn in the flesh, to guard his heart from pride and self-complacency. And it cannot be going too far to suppose, that Mr. Mahan is as much exposed to this danger as the great Apostle was. And surely it will not be amiss for him to inquire, whether his remarkable discovery, and the novelty of those exercises which seemed to distinguish him above other ministers and Christians, may not have worked in with certain principles of his nature, not yet fully sanctified; and whether the singular zeal he shows in writing books, and in compassing the land to make proselytes, may not be owing in part to these principles of nature; and whether it would be safe for him to look upon all this excitement of feeling, and all this labor to propagate his new opinions, as the unmixed result of the Holy Spirit's influence, and as a certain evidence of likeness to the blessed Jesus. And may it not be well for him to keep his mind open — as I hope he will — to further instruction from the Word and Spirit of God? For, possibly, a higher degree of illumination may disclose to him some remaining deficiencies in his character which he has overlooked. His heavenly Father may perhaps visit him with some severe affliction; "for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." If he does indeed trust in God and seek his help, God will supply all his need, — will correct any mistakes into which he may have been betrayed, and teach him to separate the hay, wood, and stubble, from the gold and silver and precious stones, — will graciously assist him in reviewing his writings, and the whole course he has pursued in preaching, and the effects he has produced on the churches of Christ. And if there has been anything wrong, —

"for there is no man that doeth good and sinneth not," — God will show him what it is. And it may be, God will make him a greater blessing to the Institution over which he presides, and to the church of Christ, than he has ever been.

There are many minor points on which I might remark. But I have meant to confine myself to the chief points. If the principal arguments, on which this doctrine of Perfection depends, have been shown to be inconclusive, it is all the case requires. I have said all I have to say on this subject, and leave it to others to do what the cause of truth may further require to be done.

I close with three brief remarks.

My first remark is on the effect which will naturally be produced upon a man's own mind, by his believing that he has already attained to perfect holiness. And here I grant, that a man's believing himself perfectly holy, *if he were so in reality*, could have none but a good influence upon him. In such a case, it would be *the belief of the truth*. And surely, the *belief of the truth* must be supposed to have a good influence upon a perfectly holy mind. But suppose a man believes himself to be perfectly holy, *when he is not*. This would be the *belief of error*. And it is easy to see what effect the belief of error, particularly of such an error as this, must have upon one who is sanctified only in part. And as I am persuaded, that those who think themselves completely sanctified are mistaken, I cannot but conclude that their opinion of themselves, is really thinking of themselves more highly than they ought to think, and that its hurtful influence upon their feelings and conduct will ere long become visible.

My second remark is, that we who do not believe the doctrine, are *in some danger of injuring ourselves and others by opposing it*. The preaching and the writings of those who maintain the doctrine, contain a great portion of most precious truth. And it is by this mixture of truth, that the error is made plausible, and insinuates itself into the minds of others. Now the danger is, that by means of the opposition we make to the particular error which they hold, we shall be led to believe the important truths contained in their writings with less firmness, to love them with

less sincerity, and to use them less profitably. The Lord preserve us from this danger, and so influence our minds and hearts, that we shall most heartily believe that portion of truth which is exhibited in the writings referred to, and shall give it even a higher place in our thoughts and in our preaching, than we have heretofore done. Thus, while we prove all things, may we hold fast that which is good.

My last remark is, that *we ought not to be over anxious on account of the temporary prevalence of error.* We ought to exert ourselves to the utmost in the spirit of love, to defend and propagate the truth, and confute error; to cherish the sincerest desires, and offer up the most fervent prayers for the good of our fellow men, and for the advancement of the reign of Christ. Thus faithfully performing the duties which devolve on us, we may, with confidence and with quietness of mind, commit all the interests of the church to the God of truth, who will certainly take care of his own cause, and will, in his sovereign providence, confound every false doctrine far more effectually, than we can by our arguments. And this he often does by letting error run on, till its nature is acted out, and its fruits are made manifest to all. It pleases the most High God to carry forward his plan of redeeming mercy through various and mighty conflicts. And every conflict will be made a means of clearing up and establishing divine truth; and will in the end contribute to the glory of God, and the good of his people. The errors, as well as the wrath of man, will be made to praise God. This mixed, disordered state, this war of elements in the moral world, will continue a while longer; but it will not last always. Better days will come to the church on earth, and an eternal day of perfect light and purity and joy to the church in heaven.

APPENDIX.

LETTER TO MR. MAHAN.*

To the Rev. Asa Mahan, President of the Oberlin Collegiate Institute.

Dear Friend and Brother,

In my remarks on your publications, I signified distinctly that I had finished what I had to say on the subject, and should leave the further consideration of it to others. Such was my deliberate purpose. But when I read your piece in the New York Evangelist, addressed as a letter to me, and containing so many expressions of the affectionate regard you felt as a former pupil; my resolution was changed, and I was satisfied that I ought not to treat such a communication with even the appearance of neglect.

I cordially reciprocate all your expressions of kindness and respect. And if I have written a sentence or a word, which has indicated a want of brotherly love, or a willingness to inflict a wound, even for a moment, upon your feelings, I shall most heartily regret it. I would not consent to debate such a subject as that before us with any man, certainly not with you, except in the spirit of love. And the relation I have sustained to you, together with the amiable temper which you have exhibited, will render it very easy to answer you in kindness, and would leave me without excuse should I do otherwise.

* First published in the New York Evangelist, March, 1841.

I come now to the subject of your letter. You represented in your Discourses, that evangelical ministers, generally, had entertained very defective views of the gracious provisions of the gospel for the sanctification of believers, and that the true Scripture doctrine on that subject was peculiar to yourself and those who agreed with you. This I thought a mistake; and I maintained that evangelical ministers had believed and preached the Scripture doctrine; though I confessed that in many instances they had not given it the prominence which it ought to have; and that, in some instances, they may have so far overlooked or neglected it, as to leave their hearers in doubt whether they believed it or not. Still I maintained, that the true Scripture doctrine respecting the provisions of the gospel had been plainly declared from the pulpit and the press, in past ages, and at the present day, and had been regarded as the foundation of hope to sinners, and the spring of holy effort to Christians. But in your letter you still insist upon it that the Scripture doctrine has not been taught by the generality of orthodox divines. And you adduce various reasons to support your opinions.

You begin by saying, "nothing respecting this same precious doctrine is to be met with in your 'Course of Study.'"

I reply, that the pamphlet called "Course of Study" was intended to suggest the *subjects* to be attended to, and the books to be consulted. And it would have been aside from the chief object of the pamphlet, to teach and defend particular doctrines. There is, however, a distinct reference to the provisions of the gospel, under the head of Atonement, and again, in the article on *faith in Christ.*

You say, too, that you did not hear any allusion to it in any conversation, Lecture, or discourse, during your connection with the Institution.

I have tried to account for it that you should have such an impression as this, as I doubt not you really have. And I shall tell you frankly how the subject has presented itself to my mind.

First, I have supposed you may have the impression, that the

true doctrine as to the provisions of the gospel was not taught in the Seminary, because it was not taught in *the exact manner* in which you have stated it. On the common principles of human nature, you may have become so attached to your particular way of stating it, that if stated in any way whatever different from that, it would seem to you not to be stated at all. Something like this you know often happens. And I have thought it may have happened in your case, and that this may help to account for it that you have such an impression. If, however, we exhibited the doctrine in Scripture language, and explained it in a manner correspondent with the obvious sense of the sacred writers, how can we be justly blamed for not stating it in precisely the way which you have chosen? Even if we had known in what manner you would think proper to set it forth, our taste and judgment might have led us to a manner more or less different.

Again, your impression may have been occasioned in part by the fact, that the gracious provisions of the gospel for the sanctification of believers did not hold so high a place in the instructions of the Seminary, as their importance demanded. Probably the doctrine was not brought into view so often, nor inculcated so earnestly as it ought to have been, and in this way you may have suffered through our neglect.

Again, I have thought it not improbable, that you had a state of mind, while in the Seminary, which would naturally prevent you from feeling any special interest in such a doctrine, and from giving any special attention to it; that although it was often exhibited in a truly Scriptural light, it made no impression on your mind; and that it now really seems to you as though you never heard anything about it. You are surely aware that it is nothing uncommon for men, even for Christians in such a state of coldness and insensibility as you say belonged to you at that period, *to hear, and understand not, and to see, and perceive not.* To one possessed of the new views and feelings with which you have been favored of late, all things appear new.

But there is one thing which may cast a still clearer light

on the fact which I am trying to account for. Under the seventh particular head in your letter, you show distinctly, that no statement we can make, either in our own words, or in the words which the Holy Ghost has taught, as to the full provisions of the gospel, will at all satisfy you, unless we hold that *perfect holiness has in fact been and will be attained during the present life.* If we teach that the provisions of the gospel are adequate to all our spiritual wants, and that the grace of Christ is sufficient not only to pardon us but to cleanse us entirely from the pollution of sin, and to cleanse us *now*, were we disposed duly to receive it; you think all this inconsistent, and "infinitely absurd," unless we also teach, that believers do in fact so receive of the fulness of Christ, that they are now made perfectly holy. This makes it evident, that notwithstanding what you have said to the contrary, you do really consider the question as to the actual attainments of Christians in the present life, to be the main question in debate. And does it not explain very satisfactorily, how you are led to think, that we, who do not believe the present perfection of Christians, have never taught anything to the purpose as to the *provisions* of the gospel? For, although we may declare ever so earnestly, that Christ is our wisdom, our righteousness, our *sanctification*, and our redemption; that he is all in all to those who believe; that he will do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think; that our remaining sins are chargeable upon *ourselves*, and not owing in the least to any deficiency in the grace of Christ; and although we may declare that he will, a few days hence, present the millions of the redeemed without spot before his Father's throne; and although we may urge Christians to trust wholly in him now, and by faith to receive of his fulness for the supply of all their wants; still in your view, we fall essentially short of the true doctrine, and "the provisions of the gospel, as we teach them, are no provisions at all," and "the revelation of them the most solemn mockery conceivable." Now, this opinion of yours clearly accounts for it, that you think your former instructors and evangelical ministers generally are so deficient in their teach-

ings respecting the provisions of the gospel. In your view we shall certainly fail of saying anything right on that subject, unless we hold also that believers do actually attain to perfect sanctification in the present life.

You see I am trying, in the exercise of all the candor and all the invention which I have, to account for it, that you should entertain such an uncomfortable idea of your brethren. I confess that in this attempt I have used an odd kind of logic; and it is an odd kind of logic by which you have been brought to such a sad conclusion respecting the great body of ministers and Christians in all ages.

I must add, that your impression on this subject, however you may have come by it, is, in my view, very wide of the truth, and the publication of it unjust and injurious to evangelical ministers.

I would here, were it proper, extract various passages from sermons which I wrote before you came to the Seminary, and which I have repeatedly preached in our chapel and elsewhere — passages in which it is strongly asserted, that the grace of the Saviour is boundless; that the gospel reveals a complete remedy for all our spiritual maladies; that faith in Christ, exercised as it ought to be, would secure to us a victory over every sin, and a full supply of all our need; that our sinful imperfections are not owing in whole or in part to any deficiency in the provisions or promises of the gospel; and that so far as we have true faith, we are invested with the beauties of holiness. Views like these have often been presented, though not so often as they should have been, by the officers of this Institution, in the pulpit, in the Lecture room, and in the Conference room; sometimes in Scripture language, and sometimes dilated upon in language of our own. And, if you will pardon me for speaking foolishly, I will say, — boasting somewhat, because you have compelled me, — that some of your best passages, setting forth the rich provisions of the gospel for our sanctification, are so like the manner in which I have been accustomed to treat the subject, that I should have

been inclined to think, had you not asserted the contrary, that you used those expressions in the way of designed imitation.

My object in this communication was, not to enter at all into the merits of the controversy, having done this so particularly in another way. But I find two things in your letter, which I am unwilling to pass over without a few brief remarks.

You say the common doctrine, which you call "the doctrine of imperfection," leaves us in the same state, "as to the actual attainment of moral purity, as we should be in, had no such provisions been made," and that, on the principle commonly adopted, "the intelligent universe will affirm that there are no provisions at all, for the attainment" of entire sanctification.

Now, my dear brother, did you not say this inadvertently? Did you well consider what would follow from the principle involved in your remarks? Let me ask then; do you expect that those who embrace your doctrine in your own words, will actually attain perfection at the *present time?* Do you expect they will attain it *at once*, as soon as they believe? If I mistake not, you will answer, No. But do you not hold, that the provisions of the gospel are made for the *present*, the *immediate* sanctification of all believers? And do you not hold that the grace, which is provided, is as sufficient to complete their sanctification at once, that is, immediately on believing, as at any future time; and that they are required to receive and apply it for this very purpose? Do you not also hold, that the divine promises as really secure the perfect holiness of believers at the *present* time, as at any time during their stay on earth; and that they are required to believe them and appropriate them for the accomplishment of this desirable end? But I know you do not think that they *will* in *fact* be thus completely sanctified at once. What then follows? Why, on your principle of reasoning, the case of believers, as to the duty of *present* perfection, is just what it would be, if no provisions were made for it; and to talk of provisions being made *any*

further than they are carried into *present* effect, is "a solemn mockery."

You see, then, the matter is not likely to stop where you have left it; and that there is a door opened for a new sect to come in, that shall rise as much above Oberlin, as Oberlin rises above the rest of Christendom. And this new sect may attack you with as powerful arguments, as those with which you have attacked others. They may say to you, and may say it with the high feeling of confidence and victory with which a new sect is so apt to be inspired — "Why talk of provisions for the *present perfection* of believers when, after all, you do not really expect them to attain it? — Such provisions are no provisions. Why not carry the business through as *we* do? Since the darkness of our former state has been chased away, we have other and more comforting views of the whole concern. *We* hold, that faith, from its very nature, secures complete sanctification *at once.* Instead of the gloomy, discouraging doctrine, that the work of sanctification is *gradual*, extending through tedious years or even tedious *days* of imperfection; we now hold, that faith secures complete sanctification *at once.* And see here, what a new and powerful motive we have to believe. *We* hold, and why should *you* be afraid to hold, *literally* and *strictly*, that 'whosoever is born of God sinneth not;' that he is immediately freed from *all* sin, and made perfectly holy. Why should sin be suffered to adhere to believers for a day, or an hour? Your doctrine would seem to make sin, for a time, 'an element of the Christian character.' And really, what does it signify for you to say that full *provision* is made for the *present*, the *immediate* perfection of believers, while you hold that it is not actually attained — no, not even expected? Provision, full provision made for the accomplishment of an object, which after all is not accomplished, and which you do not expect will be accomplished! How dark and disheartening your doctrine, compared with the bright and glorious doctrine of the *immediate*, the *instantaneous* completion of the work of sanctification in all

that have faith! For *ourselves!*" — the new sect may be bold to say — "We acknowledge no man to be a true believer, unless he has so received of the fulness of Christ, as to be entirely sanctified at once."—And you may perhaps wonder to see how this new sect is elated with the idea, that better days are coming, and that they have introduced a new era. And you may hear them bemoaning your unhappy state, and telling what pity and grief they feel on your account. And they will probably go about, calling upon ministers and churches everywhere, to cast away that dead faith which has pervaded Christendom, and to have that living faith which will not delay the work of complete sanctification for days, and years, but will accomplish it *at once;* a faith which will instantly make them *complete in Christ*, so that no taint of sin shall for a moment remain. And they may marvel at your slowness to believe, and may ascribe it to your inadequate views of the provisions of the gospel for the present and instantaneous perfection of believers.

Seeing now the door is open for such a new doctrine to come in — and as you may possibly have observed some presages of it already — and as it may grow with luxuriance in the fertile region round about you; may it not be a dictate of wisdom for you to collect and arrange your forces, and be in readiness to encounter its resolved and powerful defenders; and particularly, to see to it that you do not yourself furnish them with armor, by which they will be able to attack you with no doubtful success?

But I have a little more to say on this point. Your representation is, that, on our principles, "believers are in the same state that they would be in, if no provisions were made for their complete sanctification in the present life." I hope you will see cause to retract or modify this representation. For our belief is, that, in consequence of the provisions of the gospel, believers begin a course of holy obedience in the present life, and advance from one degree of sanctification to another to the close of life, when they are made perfect in

holiness; but that neither the increase nor the beginning of holiness could be effected, were it not for these gracious provisions. Now can you think it the same thing to remain in our natural state, *wholly destitute of holiness*, as it is to be *really holy in a degree?* — the same thing to be entirely unsanctified, as it is to have the work of sanctification begun, and carried forward towards its consummation? — the same thing to have a measure of faith and love, though far short of perfection, as it is to have none at all? Can you think it the same thing to commence the work of obedience, with the sure prospect of its completion at the end of this short life, as it is to live and die without commencing it? — the same thing, to be left without redeeming grace to perish in our sins, as it is to experience that grace so far as to have a sure title to perfect and endless purity and blessedness in heaven? How can you indulge the thought, that unless the provisions of the gospel are such, and so applied, that we shall in fact be perfectly sanctified in the present life, it is the same with us, as though there were no provisions at all?

The other point on which I intend to remark is this: — you call those who do not agree with you, "the advocates of imperfection." By imperfection you mean the remainder of sin in believers. Now, although I trust you had no such meaning, will you not be understood to call us *the advocates of sin?* And will not this impression as to your meaning, be strengthened by a passage in your Discourses, which I can never think of without pain? In your attempt to show how very erroneous they are who do not embrace your doctrine, you say, "Sin, or at least some degree of it, is regarded as an essential element of Christian character — as a kind of life-preserver." I cannot tell you how great is the injustice of this remark, and how wounding it must be to the feelings of sincere believers, who look upon sin as directly opposite to all the elements of Christian character; who regard it not as a *life-preserver*, but as constantly endangering their spiritual life, and exposing them to eternal death — who feel sin to be the most vile and hateful thing in the universe, and who abhor them-

selves and go mourning all their days, on account of it — who pant after entire deliverance from it, and whom nothing can ever satisfy, so long as they continue to be the subjects of it in any degree. I am sure, my dear brother, that you will wish that passage blotted out from your pages.

I have now noticed what is of most consequence in your letter.

And now, dear brother, how fond soever others may be of contention and strife, I hope that you and I shall have no strife but this — to grow in knowledge and grace, and to promote the holiness and salvation of our fellow men. In a strife like this let us be continually engaged. And here we may expect success. As to your own present perfection, or the perfection of any of your associates — it certainly is not a matter which a man of your modesty would like to affirm. And I must think it will be very difficult for you to *prove* to the satisfaction of your own mind, that you have already reached the mark of sinless perfection. When you examine yourself thoroughly, as I trust you do, you will be very likely to find some habits of thought or of action, some feelings or motives, some desires or tendencies of mind, which you cannot look upon with entire complacency, and which you will wish may be corrected. I hope, therefore, that neither you nor your associates will set up any claims which would seem to indicate a spirit of self-righteousness, and which would not be among those things which are "lovely and of good report." Let us then keep on safe ground, and be sure to bend our endeavors to the accomplishment of real and substantial good. Aware of past deficiencies, we will, for the future, more earnestly proclaim "the unsearchable riches of Christ." With the help of his grace, we will press forward toward the mark, constantly striving to rise, not so much above others, as above *ourselves*. We will cherish a humble and contrite heart, which is so essential a part of the Christian character. And among other important duties, let us be sure to observe that almost forgotten precept, "In lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself."

Begging you not to expect me to pursue this subject fur-

ther, and desiring most sincerely that we may be guided into all the truth, and that our hearts may be more and more knit together in love, I am, with cordial esteem and affection,

Your brother,

LEONARD WOODS.

Andover, Theological Seminary,
March, 1841.

DISSERTATION ON MIRACLES.*

God sees fit to carry on his common operations on established and uniform principles. These principles whether relating to the physical or moral world, are called *the laws of nature.* And by the laws of nature the most enlightened philosophers and divines have understood *the uniform plan according to which*, or *the uniform manner in which God exercises his power throughout the created universe.* Or it may be said, the laws of nature are the uniform method in which the powers or active principles, which God has imparted to created things, called *second* or *secondary causes*, operate and produce their effects. Or, according to the language of some, the laws of nature are the uniform manner in which events come to pass, or, in which action and the results of action among created beings take place. It is evident that various powers and properties belong to the things which are made, and are inherent in them, and that nothing in the creation, whether material or spiritual, would be what it is without those powers and properties. But we know that the existence of things, with their several powers and properties, was, at first, owing to the operation of divine power, and that their continued existence is owing to the same cause.

The above-mentioned uniform method of divine operation is evidently conducive to the most important ends. It manifests the immutable wisdom and goodness of God, and, in ways too many to

* First published in the Cyclopædia of Biblical Literature by Kitto, 1845.

be here specified, promotes the welfare of his creatures. Without the influence of this uniformity, rational beings would have no effectual motive to effort, and the affairs of the universe, intelligent and unintelligent, would be in a state of total confusion. And this general fact may be considered as a sufficient reason why God, in the common course of his providence, has adopted a uniform method of operation.

But if, in conducting the affairs of his great empire, God sees, in any particular case, as good a reason for a *deviation* from this uniform order, as there is generally for *uniformity*, that is, if the glory of his attributes and the good of his creatures require it — and no one can say that such a case may not occur — then, unquestionably, the unchangeable God will cause such a deviation; in other words, will work *miracles:* — miracles being effects which are produced, or events which take place, in a manner not conformed to the common laws of nature, and which cannot be accounted for according to those laws. In the case supposed, if God should not depart from his usual course, and work miracles, he would not show the same regard as he ordinarily does to his own glory and the good of his creatures. On the condition, then, here supposed, there is a strong and decided presumption in favor of miraculous operations; and it would contradict our best views of the immutable perfection of God, to suppose that they will not take place.

It is admitted that no man, apart from the knowledge of facts, could ever, by mere reasoning, have arrived at a confident belief, that the conjuncture supposed would certainly occur. But to us who know that mankind are so depraved and wretched, and that the efforts of human wisdom to obtain relief have been in vain, the importance of a special divine interposition is very apparent. And being informed what the plan is, which a merciful God has adopted for our recovery to holiness and happiness, and being satisfied that this plan, so perfectly suited to the end in view, could never have been discovered by man, and never executed, except by a divine dispensation involving miracles, we conclude, that the introduction of a new and miraculous dispen-

sation was in the highest degree an honor to God and a blessing to the world. It is clear that man could not have been saved without it. The divine government proceeding according to the original law of justice, would have left no hope for transgressors. If man is to be saved, there must be a departure from the original laws of a moral government. There must be a new dispensation, and that new dispensation must be made known to man; because, without knowing it, man could not enjoy its benefits. The work of saving a lost world cannot be accomplished while the world remains wholly ignorant of the grace which saves. But the requisite knowledge can never be reached by any of our natural faculties, and never communicated to us by anything in creation. It must come from God and that in an extraordinary manner. Now God is able, if he please, by a supernatural influence, to impart the requisite knowledge directly to every human being. But this mode of imparting knowledge would itself be miraculous, as it would be entirely beyond what any human mind would be capable of in the use of ordinary means. But it is manifest that such a mode of imparting knowledge is not in fact the mode which God has chosen, and that it would not be well suited to the ends of divine wisdom. The method of divine appointment, as set forth in the sacred volume, is that of making a revelation to a number of individuals, who are to write and publish it for the benefit of the world. This revelation to individuals is made in such a manner as renders it certain to their minds, that the revelation is from God. But how can that revelation be made available to others? It will not answer the purpose for those who receive it merely to declare that God has made such a revelation to them, and authorized them to proclaim it to their fellow creatures. For how shall we know that they are not deceivers? Or if their character is such as to repel any suspicion of this kind, how shall we know that they are not themselves deceived, — as it is no uncommon thing for a man, even a good man, to be misled by enthusiastic impressions, or in some other way? How shall we come to feel entire confidence in the truth and divine authority of what individuals say has been revealed to them from

God? Have we not a right, nay, are we not bound in duty, to ask for evidence? But what evidence will suffice? The reply is obvious. The revelation, in order to be of use to us, as it is to those who receive it directly from God, must not only be declared by them to us, but must have a divine attestation. In other words, those who declare it to us must show, by some incontestable proof, that *it is from God.* Such proof is found in a miracle. If an event takes place which we know to be contrary to the laws of nature, we at once recognize it as the special act of him who is the God of nature, and who alone can suspend its laws, and produce effects in another way. The evidence of a direct interposition of God given in this way is irresistible. No man, no infidel, could witness an obvious miracle, without being struck with awe, and recognizing *the finger of God.* What would become of the skepticism of a Hume or a Voltaire, should he go to the grave where a father or brother had been buried for years, and see him wake up to life and come forth at the word of a divine messenger? What will become of his skepticism, when he himself, after having slept in death thousands of years, shall rise from the dead, and shall see others rise around him? In a miracle, God works, and shows us his hand, speaks, and causes us to hear his voice, as plainly as if he should instantly, before our astonished eyes, create a new sun in the expanse of heaven, or in a voice as loud as thunder should speak distinct and intelligible words in our ears.

In respect to the subject before us, there is a manifest and wide difference between a miracle and any event which is referable to the laws of nature. Let a man come to us and say, that such a doctrine has been made known to him by special revelation. It may properly be our first inquiry, whether the doctrine referred to, for example the deity of Christ, or the truth of the Newtonian philosophy, is supported by other evidence. If so, we receive it on the ground of that other evidence, not because he tells us that it was revealed to him. But suppose that there is no other evidence, and that if we receive it, we must receive it on the ground of his declaration. We look then for evidence that

his declaration is true. We say to him, prove that you are a prophet sent from God, and that this doctrine has been revealed to you from above. He undertakes to give the proof required, and he says, the Hudson river, or the Danube, which is now liquid, shall, to a considerable depth, become a solid mass, before the end of January; and thus my claim to a special revelation shall be confirmed. We reply to him, — why not make it a solid mass now in the midst of summer? And why not freeze up a river in the torrid zone? A man who has had no revelation can do all that you undertake. He may say, he will bring about a total eclipse of the sun at such a time — having found out the right time. We tell him to bring about such an eclipse in *the old of the moon*, and we will yield to his pretensions.

It is clear that no event, which can be accounted for on natural principles, can prove a supernatural interposition, or contain a divine attestation to the truth of a prophet's claim. But when we look at an event which cannot be traced to the laws of nature, and is clearly above them, such as the burning of the wood upon the altar in the case of Elijah's controversy with the false prophets, or the resurrection of Lazarus, we cannot avoid the conviction, that the Lord of heaven and earth does, by such a miracle, give his testimony, that Elijah is his prophet, and that Jesus is the Messiah. The evidence arising from miracles is so striking and conclusive, that there is no way for an infidel to evade it, but to deny the existence of miracles, and to hold that all the events called miraculous may be accounted for according to the laws of nature.

Hume arrays *uniform experience* against the credibility of miracles. But the shallow sophistry of his argument has been fully exposed by Campbell, Paley and many others. We inquire what and how much he means by *uniform experience*. Does he mean his own experience? But because *he* has never witnessed a miracle, does it follow that others have not? Does he mean the uniform experience of the greater part of mankind? But how does he know that the experience of a smaller part has not been different from that of the greater part? Does he mean,

then, the uniform experience of all mankind in all ages? How then does his argument stand? He undertakes to prove that no man has ever witnessed or experienced a miracle, and his real argument is, that no one *has* ever witnessed or experienced it. In other words, to *prove* that there has never been a miracle, he *asserts* that there never has been a miracle. This is the nature of his argument — an instance of *petitio principii*, which a man of Hume's logical powers would never have resorted to, had it not been for his enmity to religion.

If it is said that the *ordinary* experience of mankind in general *contradicts* the idea of a miracle, it is said without due consideration. The experience or testimony of any number of men cannot be regarded as contradictory to the experience or testimony of other men, unless the experience or testimony of both parties relate to the same event, and to the same place and time of its occurrence. Ten thousand Romans might have said that no such thing as the murder of Julius Cæsar had ever taken place within their observation or experience, and their testimony might have been true; but how would their testimony have contradicted the testimony of those who witnessed the fatal deed of his murderers? There is no contradiction between two witnesses, or two sets of witnesses, if the testimony of both may be true. Suppose two men testify before a court of justice, that at such a time, naming the hour and the minute, and in such a room, naming the very part of the room, they saw a man murder his father by stabbing him. Now let three other men come forward and testify that they often saw the father and son together, but never witnessed any act of violence on the part of the son. Here is no contradiction of testimonies; for both may be true. But let three witnesses testify that they were present at the very time and place referred to; that they saw the father and son together in the room, and the part of the room mentioned by the two witnesses; that the son had no instrument in his hand; and that the father was attacked suddenly with apoplexy, and died in the arms of his son. Here you have contradictory testimonies and both cannot be true. The testimony of all generations antecedent to

the time of Christ, that they had never seen a man who had been dead and buried for some days, raised to life by a word of com mand; and the testimony of the greater part of the Jewish nation at that time that they had seen no such thing as the resurrection of Lazarus, would not have contradicted the testimony of the few who declared that they were present and witnessed his resurrection. The truth of the former testimonies would not have disproved the truth of the last. So much for the argument of Hume. After all he seems to admit that a miracle may be credible, *if it is not wrought in favor of religion;* whereas it would have been much nearer the truth, had he said, a miracle is credible, if it *is* wrought in favor of religion.

The miraculous events recorded in the Scriptures, particularly those which took place in the times of Moses and Christ, have all the marks which are necessary to prove them to have been matters of fact, and worthy of full credit, and to distinguish them from the feats of jugglers and impostors. This has been shown very satisfactorily by Leslie, Paley, Douglas, and many others. These miracles took place in the most public manner, and in the presence of many witnesses; so that there was opportunity to subject them to the most searching scrutiny. Good men and bad men were able and disposed to examine them thoroughly, and to prove them to have been impostors, if they had been so. Why did not the scribes and pharisees and rulers, who were so full of zeal against the religion of Jesus, adopt the most natural and effectual means of preventing its growing influence? Why did they not bring Jesus and his disciples to a fair trial before a proper tribunal, and prove them to be deceivers?

A large number of men, of unquestionable honesty and intelligence, constantly affirmed that the miracles took place before their eyes. And some of these original witnesses wrote and published histories of the facts, in the places where they were alleged to have occurred, and near the time of their occurrence. In these histories it was openly asserted that the miracles, as described, were publicly known and acknowledged to have taken

place; and this no one took upon him to contradict, or to question. Moreover, many persons who stood forth as witnesses of these miracles passed their lives in labors, dangers, and sufferings, in attestation of the accounts they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of the truth of those accounts; and, from the same motive, they voluntarily submitted to new rules of conduct; while nothing like this is true respecting any other pretended miracles. (See Paley's *Evidences*). Paley attaches great importance, and that very justly, to these positions; and he says he should believe in the reality of miracles in any other case, if attended with the circumstances which distinguished the miracles of Christ. And if any one calls assent to such evidence credulity, it is incumbent on him to produce examples in which the same evidence has turned out to be fallacious.

In comparing the evidence for Christian miracles with that which can be offered in favor of any other miracles, it is proper, as the same author shows, to lay out of the case such accounts as the following: —

1. It is proper to lay out of the case such accounts of supernatural events as are written a long time after their alleged occurrence. On this principle we may at once set aside the miraculous story of Pythagoras, the fables of the heroic ages, a great part of the accounts of popish saints, and the miracles of Apollonius Tyanæus. And this circumstance is shown to be of special value in regard to the history of Ignatius Loyola. His life, written by a companion of his, who was one of the order of the Jesuits, was published about fifteen years after his death. The author of this biography, so far from ascribing miracles to Ignatius, states the reasons why he was not invested with any such power. About sixty years after, the Jesuits, wishing to exalt the character of their founder, began to attribute to him a catalogue of miracles, which could not then be distinctly disproved, and which those who ruled in the church were disposed to admit upon the slightest evidence.

2. We may lay out of the case accounts published in one country of what passed in a distant country, without any proof

that such accounts were received or known at home. It is greatly in favor of Christianity that the history of Christ was first published, and his church first planted in the place where he lived, and wrought miracles, and died. But most of the miracles of Apollonius Tyanæus are related to have been performed in India; while we have no evidence that the history of those miracles was ever published, or that the miracles were ever heard of, in India. This matter is satisfactorily treated by Douglas in his *Criterion*.

3. We ought to lay out of the case *transient rumors*. On the first publication of any story, unless we are personally acquainted with the fact referred to, we cannot know whether it is true or false. We look for its confirmation, its increasing notoriety, and its permanency, and for subsequent accounts in different forms, to give it support. In this respect the miracles recorded in Scripture are presented before us in the most favorable light.

4. We lay out of the case what may be called *naked history*,—history found merely in a book, unattended with any evidence that the accounts given in the book were credited and acted upon at the time when the events are said to have occurred, and unsupported by any collateral or subsequent testimony, or by any important visible effects. We see here what singular advantage attends the history of the miracles of Christ. That history is combined with permanent Christian institutions; with the time and place, and circumstances of the origin and progress of the Christian religion, as collected from other history; with its prevalence to the present day; with the fact of our present books having been received by the advocates of Christianity from the first; with a great variety of subsequent books referring to the transactions recorded in the four gospels, and containing accounts of the effects which flowed from the belief of those transactions—those subsequent books having been written with very different views, 'so disagreeing as to repel the suspicion of confederacy, and yet so agreeing as to show that they were founded in a common origin.'

5. We lay out of the case stories of supernatural events upon

which nothing depends, and in which no interest is involved — stories which require only an indolent assent, and which pass from one to another without examination. How different are the accounts of the miracles of Christ! Those accounts, if true, decided the most momentous questions upon which the immortal mind can fix. Who could be indifferent and careless in such a case as this? Whoever entertained the account of these miracles, whether Jew or Gentile, could not avoid the following reflection: 'If these things be true, I must surrender the principles in which I have been brought up, the religion in which my fathers lived and died.' And who would do this? Who would give up his most favorite opinions, and his former way of life, and adopt new rules, and new habits, and a new course of conduct, and encounter the severest sufferings, upon a mere idle report, or, indeed, without the most serious consideration, and the fullest conviction of the truth of the history in which he confided?

6. We lay aside all those events which can be accounted for by a heated imagination, false perception, momentary insanity, or any other natural principle. Now, although we may, in some cases, be in doubt, whether the events which take place can be resolved into the common powers of nature, no doubt can remain as to the principal miracles of Christ. If a person born blind is, by a word, restored to sight, or a man unquestionably dead restored to life, or if a conversion takes place, with the accompanying circumstances and the permanent consequences of that of Paul, we are sure that the event must be ascribed to a supernatural cause.

It appears, then, that after the various classes of events above mentioned have been excluded, the miracles recorded in Scripture remain, with all the characteristics of supernatural events, showing the special presence and extraordinary agency of God, and containing his direct testimony in favor of the doctrines to which they refer. Hence we see the propriety and the perfect conclusiveness of the appeal which Jesus often made to his works as proof of his Messiahship: 'The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me;' again, 'The works that I do,

bear witness of me, that the Father has sent me.' These miraculous works were as really a divine attestation to the Messiahship of Jesus as that voice which God uttered from heaven, 'This is my beloved Son, hear ye him.'

It has been a long agitated question, whether miracles have ever been wrought or can be consistently supposed to be wrought, *by apostate spirits.*

It is sufficient to say here, that it would be evidently inconsistent with the character of God to empower or to suffer wicked beings to work miracles *in support of falsehood.* Miracles, supposing them not to be wrought at random, but to contain a divine attestation, must go to support the truth. Neither wicked beings nor good beings can ever work them *in such a manner* that they shall avail to give countenance to error, and thus nullify the clearest and most striking evidence which can be given in support of the truth of a special divine communication. Balaam was a *real prophet;* that is, he was endued with supernatural knowledge, and enabled to predict the good which was to come upon the people of God. His supernatural foresight availed to make known the truth —as really so as though he had been a good man. Yea, the divine testimony in that case was attended with one peculiar advantage, namely, that Balaam was constrained by divine influence to pronounce a blessing upon Israel against both his interest and his inclination. And if wicked spirits in the time of Christ had power to produce preternatural effects upon the minds or bodies of men, and if those effects are to be ranked among real miracles, (which however, we do not affirm), still the end of miracles is not contravened. For those very operations of evil spirits were under the control of divine providence, and were made in two ways to subserve the cause of Christ. First; they furnished an occasion, as doubtless they were designed by God to do, for Christ to show his power over evil spirits, and, by his superior miracles, to give a new proof of his Messiahship. Secondly; the evil spirits themselves were constrained to give their testimony, that Jesus was the Christ, the Holy One of Israel—a very different matter from what it would have been if they had declared that

Jesus was an impostor, and had undertaken to support their declaration by supernatural works.

Instead, therefore, of attempting to prove absolutely, as some writers have done, that evil spirits have never had power, and never been permitted, in any case, to do supernatural works, we shall content ourselves with saying, that God has never given them power, and never permitted them to do such works *in such circumstances and in such a manner*, as to support error, or in any way to discredit divine truth. This being the case, it will not detract at all from the weight of the testimony which God gives by miracles to the truth of any supernatural revelation, if, in some instances, he should see fit to empower evil spirits to do miraculous works *for the same holy ends* — thus making use of the agency of evil spirits, as well as of good men, to promote the cause of righteousness and truth.

As to the time when the miraculous dispensation ceased, we can only remark, that the power of working miracles, which belonged preëminently to Christ and his apostles, and, in inferior degrees, to many other Christians in the apostolic age, subsided gradually. After the great object of supernatural works was accomplished in the establishment of the Christian religion, with all its sacred truths, and its divinely oppointed institutions, during the life of Christ and his apostles, there appears to have been no farther occasion for miracles, and no satisfactory evidence that they actually occurred.

If the inquiry is made, whether in the future advancement of Christ's kingdom and the conversion of Jews and gentiles, miraculous interpositions are to be expected, our reply is, that this must be referred entirely to the sovereign wisdom of God. It does, indeed seem quite evident, that the grand design and appropriate influence of miracles have been already realized in the confirmation of the truth and authority of the Christian religion. And it has become more and more evident, that the gospel may be propagated, and men in all circumstances converted, by the power of divine truth, and the renewing of the Holy Spirit, without any resort to miracles. From these and other consider-

ations we very naturally infer, that the recurrence of a miraculous dispensation is not required in order to the completion of the Saviour's work; still it is not for us to decide this point. As Christians we ought to keep in remembrance that God's ways are not as our ways, and to cherish such a state of mind, that if God should at any time see fit, for the glory of his name and the salvation of men, to repeat the wonderful works which he wrought in former days, or to perform any other unquestionable miracles, we may not turn away from them in sullen unbelief, but may hail them as precious tokens of God's special favor, and evidences of his gracious design to give new success to the gospel, and an enlargement and prosperity never before experienced to the kingdom of righteousness and peace.

COURSE OF STUDY.

The following outline, which was prepared many years ago, was intended as an assistant to the members of the Seminary in Andover, in regard to the general order of subjects in Theology and the books to be consulted. It will be seen however, that the course of Lectures in these volumes varies in many respects from the order marked out in this outline. Some books are here added, and a particular reference to the works of the author here published.

NATURAL THEOLOGY.

1. Proof of the divine existence, stated by different writers.

Paley's Natural Theology. Bentley's Boylian Lectures. Dwight's Theology, vol. 1. Serm. 1. Dick's Theology, vol. 1. Lect. 1, 2. Knapp's Theol. Minute Philosopher, Dial. 4. Abernethy's Sermons, Serm. 1. Clarke's Demonstration. Brown's Philosophy of the Mind, vol. 3. p. 92. Brown on Cause and Effect. Stapferi Theologia, vol. 1. Cap. 3. § 266—994. Oeuvres de Pascal, Tom. 2. Sect. 3. Beattie, vol. 8. p. 6. Charnock's Sermons, vol. 1. p. 1. Bates's Works, Chap. 1—7. Leighton's Lectures, Lect. 7. Foster's Natural Religion, Chap. 1. Abbadie de la Religion Chretienne, Tom. 1. Sect. 1. Hey's Lectures, Vol. 1. Chap. 3, 4. Berkeley's Dialogues. Hamilton's attempt to prove the Divine Existence. Oeuvres de Fenelon, Tom. 2. J. A. Turretin, vol. 1. p. 52. Cudworth's Intellect. Syst. Woods's Works, vol. 1.; see Table of Contents.

2. Hypothesis and arguments of Atheists.

Bentley's Boyl. Lect. 1—8. Dwight's Theol. vol. 1. Serm. 2. Hall's Serm. on Modern Infidelity. Stapferi Theol. vol. 2. Cap. 6. Beattie's Works, vol. 8. p. 6. Stillingfleet's Origines Sac. Book 3. Chap. 1, 2, 3. Warburton's Div. Legat. Pt. 1. p. 34—78. Nichols's Conference, vol. 2. p. 437. Abbadie de la Relig. Chret. Tom. 1. Sect. 2.

3. Moral perfections of God, proved by the light of nature.

Paley's Nat. Theol. Chap. 26. Dwight's Theol. vol. 1. Serm. 8. Theology of Knapp. Dick. Abernethy's Sermons, vol. 3. Serm. 2, 3. Brown's Philosophy, Lect. 93—95. Bellamy's Sermons on the Wisdom of God in the permission of sin. Barrow's Works, vol. 2. p. 66. Ridgley's Body of Div. vol. 1. Quest. 2. Bates's Works, Chap. 1. Foster's Nat. Relig. Chap. 6. J. A. Turretin, vol. 1. p. 81.

DIVINE REVELATION.

THE SUBJECT GENERALLY.

Storr and Flatt's Biblical Theology. Lectures on the Evidences of Christianity, by Daniel Wilson. Dick's Theol. vol. 1. Lect. 3—13. Knapp's Christian Theology. Hill's Lectures on Divinity. Leland's View of Deistical Writers. Delany's Revelation examined. Hartley's Truth of the Ch. Relig. Watson's Apology for the Bible, and for Christianity. Province of Reason. Clarke's Nat. and Rev. Relig. [Watson's Tracts, vol. 4.] Locke's Reasonableness of Christianity, [W's Tracts, vol. 4.] Leland's Answer to Tindal. Macknight on the Probability of the Gospel History. [W's Tracts, vol. 5.] Sykes's Truth of the Christian Religion. Storr's Doctrina Chr. Grotius de Veritate. Boylian Lectures. Plain reasons for being a Christian. [Watson's Tracts, vol. 3.] Brown's Essay on the Characteristics. Shaftsbury's Characteristics. Toland's Nazarenus, etc. Collins's Grounds. Chubb's true Gospel. Blount's Oracles of Reason. Paine's Age of Reason. Tillotson's Sermons, vol. 12. Serm. 238—245. Allix on Script. [W's Tracts, vol. 1.) Stillingfleet's Orig. Sac. Brown's body of Divinity. Lloyd's Inquiry. Jenkyn's Reasonableness of the Chr. Religion. Bates's Works. Origen Contra Celsum. [Sanct. Pat. Op. Tom. 7, 8.] Prideaux's Life of Mahomet, and Letter to Deists. Justin Martyr's Apol. [Sanct. Pat. Op. Polem.] The same Tr. by Reeves. Item. Oratio et Cohort. ad Graec. et Dial cum Tryph. Clementis Alexan. Cohort. ad Gent. [Sanct. Pat. Op. Tom. 4.] Price's Dissertat. Hammond's Works, vol. 1. Witherspoon's Works, vol. 4. Brown's Int. to the Bible. Deism Revealed. West's Defence of the Chr. Rev. Littleton's St. Paul. Nichols's Conf. Warburton's Div. Leg. Deism compared with Christianity. J. A. Turretin, vol. 1.

1. Desirableness and necessity of Revelation.

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5. *Internal Evidence.* Character of Christ and the Apostles, and the nature and tendency of Christianity.

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7. Coincidence of the Epistles with the Acts.

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SUBJECT GENERALLY.—1. Proof of Inspiration in a general view.

Wilson's Lectures on the Evidences of Christianity. Storr and Flatt's Biblical Theol. Knapp's Ch. Theology, vol. 1. Dick's Theol. Calamy's Sermons, 2—4. Dick on Inspiration, Ch. 3—6. Parry on Inspiration of the Apostles, Sect. 3. Lowth on Inspiration. Scott's Essays, Ess. I. Flatt's Mag. Calvin, B. 1. c. 7. Rheinhard's Dogmat. Proleg. Loc. I. Gerard's Institutes. Tillotson's Serm. vol. 2. Serm. 21. Michælis on New Test. vol. 1. Ch. 3. Townson's Works. Zacharia's Bibl. Theol. vol. 1. Sect. 19—41. Woods, vol. 1; see Contents.

2. In what sense and degree were the Scriptures inspired.

Calamy's Serm. 2—5. and Appendix. Hartley's Chr. Relig. p. 18—22. Dick on Ins. Ch. 1. Parry Do. Introduction and Sect. 1. and 2. Benson Do. [W's Tracts, vol. 4.] Ridgley, vol. 1. p. 47. Wardlaw's Disc. Note I. p. 418. Note L. p. 423. Campbell's Gospels, vol. 1. Diss. 1. part 2. Whitby's Gen. Pref. 1. 2. 3. Rheinhard's Dogmat. § 20. Horæ Bib. p. 240—249. Emmons's Serm. 2. W's Tracts, vol. 3. p. 467—482. De Wette's Lehrbuch d. Dogmat. Theil. 2. p. 48. Henderson's Lect. on Inspiration. Woods, vol. 1; see Contents.

OBJECTIONS TO INSPIRATION.

Obj. 1. The authors of the Scriptures write in the exercise of their own faculties; in the use of advantages within their reach; and with the same diversity of style as is common with other writers.

Calamy's Serm. 5—8. Campbell's Gosp. vol. 1. Diss. 1. Part 2. Woods, vol. 1; see Contents.

Obj. 2. There are discrepancies among the writers, inconsistent with their plenary inspiration.

Calamy's Serm. 6. 7. Paley's Evid. Part 3. Ch. 1. Ridgley's B. of Div. vol. 1. p. 39. Owen and Randolph. Woods, vol. 1; see Contents.

Obj. 3. The manner of quoting from the Old Test. by the writers of the New Test. inconsistent with their inspiration.

Owen and Randolph on Quot. Storr's Hist. Sense, § 24. Sykes's Tr. of the Ch. Relig. Michaelis on the New Test. Rheinhard's Opuscula Acad. vol. 1. p. 475—525. Flatt and Suskind's Mag. St. 13—S. 1—67. Woods, vol. 1; see Contents.

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SUBJECT GENERALLY.—1. Rules for the study of the Scriptures with a view to a correct system of Theology.

Dwight's Theology. Storr and Flatt's Bib. Theol. Knapp's Chr. Theology. Dick's Theology. Taylor's Scheme of Script. Div. ch. 1. [W's Tracts, vol. 1.] Hey's Lect. vol. 1. Ch. 10. Leighton's Lect. Introduction. Ernesti on Interpretation. Campbell on Syst. Theol. Introd. Disc. and Lect. 1—6. Scott's Essays 2. Brown's Intro. to the Bible, Ch. 2. Irving's Oration, 1, 2. Stapferi. tom. 1. cap. 1, 2. Dick on Inspirat. ch. 8. Francke's Guide to the study of the Scrip. Witherspoon's Works, vol. 4. Introd. Lect. Pictet. Theol. lib. 1. cap. 28. Jahn on the study of the Orig. Lang. Note E. Woods, vol. 1; see Contents.

2. Explanation of the language commonly employed respecting the divine attributes.

3. *Unity of God.* Meaning of the phrase. What does the light of nature teach? Particular design of the texts which assert the unity of God. Practical uses.

Dwight's Theol. vol. 1. Serm. 4. Abernethy's Disc. vol. 1. Disc. 5. Clarke's Dem. Prop. 7. Wardlaw's Disc. 1. Priestley's Instit. vol. 1. Horsley's Tracts. Yates's Vind. Part 2. ch. 1, 2. Stuart's Lett. to Channing, Let. 2. Bible News, Part 1. Ridgley, vol. 1. Quest. 7. Brown's Philos. vol. 3. Lect. 93. Paley's Theol. ch. 25. J. P. Smith's Scrip. Test. vol. 1. chap. 1. and Notes. Burnet on the Art. p. 23, 24. Belsham's Treatises. Gill's Body of Div. vol. 1. p. 183. Turret. Theol. tom. 1. Loc. 3. p. 198. Foster's Nat. Relig. ch. 2. Witherspoon's Works, vol. 4. Lect. 9. Fratres Poloni, tom. 4. Woods, vol. 1; see Contents.

4. *Eternity of God.* Proof from Reason and Scripture. Practical uses.

Dwight's Theol. vol. 1. Serm. 5. Saurin's Serm. vol. 1. Serm. 2. Paley's Nat. Theol. Charnock on Div. Perf. Clarke on the Attr. Ridgley, vol. 1. 57. Mastricht, cap. 11. Lib. 2. Turretin, tom. 1. Loc. 3. Qu. 10. Tillotson, vol. 1. (fol.) p. 761. Woods, vol. 1; see Contents.

5. *Immutability of God.* Proof from Reason and Scripture. In what sense is God immutable? Objections from the texts which represent God as repenting, turning, etc. Show that the change implied results from the immutable perfection of God. Practical uses.

Dwight's Theol. vol. 1. Serm. 5. Charnock's Dis. vol. 1. p. 125. Hopkins's Syst. vol. 1. ch. 2. Ridgley, vol. 1. p. 62. Price on Prov. Diss. 2. Magee on At. No. 8. p. 87. Mastricht, Cap. 8. Lib. 2. Turretin, tom. 1. Loc. 3. Qu. 2. Smalley's Sermons, vol. 1. Serm. 5.

6. *Omniscience and Omnipresence of God.* Proof. Different senses in which God is present. Comparison between God and man in respect to knowledge. Practical uses.

Dwight, vol. 1. Serm. 6. Charnock, vol. 1. p. 148. Ridgley, vol. 1. p. 64. Saurin's Serm. vol. 1. Serm. 3. Clarke's Dem. Prop. 3. Doederl. Th. vol. 1. p. 302 and 303. Foster's Nat. Relig. ch. 3. Turretin, tom. 1. loc. 3. Qu. 9. Woods, vol. 1; see Contents.

7. *Omnipotence of God.* Proof from the fact of *creation*, and from the extent and magnitude of divine works. Scripture proof. Meaning of the texts which ascribe want of power to God. Practical uses.

Dwight, vol. 1. Serm. 7. Clarke's Dem. Prop. 10. Ridgley, vol. 1. p. 64. Charnock, vol 1. p. 257. Doederl. vol. 1. p. 326. Gerhard. tom. 3. p. 138. Foster's Nat. Relig. ch. 7. Saurin's Serm. vol. 1. Serm. 4. Turretin, tom. 1. loc. 3. Qu. 21. Brown's Philos. vol. 3. p. 450. Do. vol. 1. p. 110. Woods, vol. 4; see Contents.

8. *Independence and self-sufficiency of God.* Explanation and proof. How reconciled with the representation that God receives pleasure and honor from his works, especially from the love and obedience of his intelligent creatures.

Edwards on God's Last End. [Works, vol. 6. p. 23.] Ridgley, vol. 1. p. 55, 56. Emmons's Serm. 6. Turretin, tom. 1. Loc. 3. Qu. 14 to 18. Mastricht, Cap. 21. Book 2.

9. *Benevolence of God.* Can it be inferred from his natural

perfections? The object of divine benevolence, and the ways in which it is displayed. Objections from the existence of natural and moral evil, answered. Practical uses.

Dwight, vol. 1. Serm. 9. Saurin, vol. 1. Serm. 7. Emmons's Serm. 5. Hartley on Man, vol. 3. ch, 3. Hopkins's Syst. vol. 1. ch. 2. Ridgley, vol. 1. p. 80. Balguy, on Div. Benev. Chauncy on Do. Davies's Sermons, vol. 1. Serm. 18. Strong on Benevolence and Misery. Do. Sermons 1, 2. Brown's Philosophy, vol. 3. p. 451. Paley's Theol. Stapfer, vol. 1. p. 129—137. Turretin, tom. 1. loc. 3. Qu. 20.—Mastricht, cap. 16. Lib. 2. Smalley's Sermons, 3. vol. 1. Woods, vol. 3, 4.

Mercy and grace of God. Are these primary attributes, or only branches of benevolence. Practical uses.

Dwight, vol. 1. Serm. 12. Ridgley, vol. 1. p. 80. Saurin's Serm. vol. 1. Serm. 7, 8. Foster's Nat. Rel. ch. 8. Turretin, tom. 1. loc. 3. Qu. 20. Willard's Body of Div. p. 81, 87.

11. *Divine Wisdom.* Is it a natural or moral, a simple or complex attribute? Evidences of it in the word and works of God. Practical uses.

Dwight, vol. 1. Serm. 13. Ridgley, vol. 1. p. 71. Charnock's Works, vol. 1. p. 207. Saurin's Serm. vol. 1. 5. Turretin, tom. 1. loc. 3. Qu. 12. Foster's Nat. Rel. ch. 4. Bellamy's Sermon on the Wisdom of God in the permission of sin. Clarke's Dem. Prop. 2. Ray's Wisdom of God. Hopkins's Syst. vol. 1. Chap. 2. p. 71.

12. *Divine Justice.* Definition and Proof. Its Relation to benevolence. Amiableness. Practical uses.

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13. *Divine Veracity.* Definition and proof. Objection, from the cases in which God has not executed his word. Practical uses.

Dwight, vol. 1. Serm. 9. Ridgley, vol. 1. p. 90. Doederl. Theol. vol. 1. p. 349. Edwards's Works, vol. 7. p. 412. Gerhard, tom. 1. loc. 3. cap. 21.

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3. Christ's divinity proved from the divine names applied to him. Are these names applied to Christ in their highest sense?

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Dwight, vol. 2. Serm. 35. Wardlaw, Disc. 3. Do. Reply, part 2. ch. 5. Watts, vol. 5. prop. 7, 8. Wynpersse, sec. 5. Ridgley, vol. 1. p. 134—150. Scott's Essays, 6. Abbadie, sect. 2. ch. 1—3. Stuart's Lett. to C. 3d edit. p. 60. Middleton on the Greek Art. p. 343, 380, 455, 425, 574, 621. Flatt's Comm. de Deitate Chr. Smith's Scrip. Test. vol. 1. book 2. ch. 6. vol. 2. p. 446—459, 672. Note B. to ch. 4. p. 511, 597, 237. Nares's Remarks, p. 42—132, 217—266. Clarke on the Trin. ch. 2. sec. 1. Part 2. sec. 24. Lindsey's Exam. of the Div. of Jesus Christ, sec. 3. Yates's Vind. part 3. ch. 5. Jamieson's Vind. vol. 1. book 2. ch. 1. Witherspoon, vol. 4. Lect. 10. Horæ Heb. tom. 2. lib. 1. Doddridge's Lect. vol. 2. p. 158—164. Smith on the Trin. sec. 6. Wheatly on Creed, p. 147, 156. Glass's Works, vol. 3. p. 7. Woods, vol. 1; see Contents.

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6. Christ's Divinity argued from passages in the Old Testament and the New, representing him as the object of religious faith and trust.

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